

THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

1878-79-80

ITS CAUSES, ITS CONDUCT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

BY

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"The maintenance of an inviolable character for moderation, ~~703~~ faith, and scrupulous regard for Treaty, ought to have been the simple grounds on which the British Government should have endeavoured to establish an influence, superior to that of other Europeans, over the Native powers of India; and the danger and discredit arising from the forfeiture of this preeminence, could not be compensated for by the temporary success of any plan of violence and injustice"

Resolution of the House of Commons in 1782.

VOL. I

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TO
MY WIFE
I DEDICATE A BOOK WHICH
BUT FOR HER ENCOURAGEMENT
AND AID WOULD NEVER
HAVE BEEN WRITTEN

PREFACE

WHEN first the idea of writing a History of the Second Afghan War began to occupy my mind, my ambition went no farther than the production of a faithful record of events in which I had borne a small part, and of which, so far as they had come under my observation, I had taken careful note. The kindness of many of the chief actors in those events soon placed me in a position to realize this object, and I sat down to write the introductory chapter which was to explain to my future readers why the Indian Government had invaded a country with which it earnestly desired to live in peace and amity, little suspecting whither it would lead me.

To ensure that the sketch which I had in my mind, should be thoroughly accurate, I procured every official and non-official publication bearing upon Afghan and Central Asian affairs, and in studying these I, or rather we—for from the first, my wife was my fellow-student and co-worker—soon had the conviction forced upon us that the war of 1878 had sprung out of no change of attitude on the part of the Amir of Afghanistan, but out of a change of policy on the part of the British Government—a change due to fears which experience of the country beyond the Indus had

shown me to be ill-founded—and that, instead of having been reluctantly undertaken by an insulted and endangered State for the vindication of its honour and the protection of its frontiers, it had been deliberately led up to by a series of steps, some diplomatic, some military, which, in the end, had left Shere Ali no choice but to consent to the diminution of his own authority and his country's independence, or to accept a contest in which *his* fortunes, at least, were certain to suffer shipwreck.

But these unpleasant truths once admitted, we had to recognize that the scope of our book must be enlarged. To present a faithful picture of the war itself and to draw the right military lessons from its experiences, was no less important than before; but to lay bare the errors of judgment which had brought it about, was now of infinitely greater moment, since those errors, crystallized into a policy, still persisted, and might any day involve India in hostilities with neighbours who, powerless to harm her whilst she confined herself within her natural limits, must become formidable as soon as those limits were overstept.

The new title of our book—The History of the Second Afghan War, its Causes, its Conduct and its Consequences—reflected the change which had taken place in our point of view, and the amount of additional labour entailed upon us by that change may be gathered from the fact that two-thirds of the present volume deal exclusively with the first branch of our subject—the Causes of the War. For this labour, however, there was ample reward in the growing hope that

the History, when completed, would deal a deadly blow to the Forward Policy. Unfortunately, however, our progress was slow, whilst the danger that it had become my dearest desire to avert, was drawing rapidly nearer; so, feeling that this was a case where private must give place to public duty, I turned, in the spring of 1894, from the work to which, by accepting the papers so generously confided to me, I had pledged myself—to try, before it was too late, to show Englishmen the rocks towards which they were drifting, and to clear their minds of a delusion, by encouraging which it had become possible for the military party in India to dominate her Government, and to give a fatal turn to her relations with the border tribes.

The field of controversy once entered upon, I found great difficulty in withdrawing from it. The resistance of the Waziris to the delimitation of their country; the Chitral revolt and the subsequent Chitral expedition; the Tochi outbreak, and the border troubles that culminated in the Tirah campaign—events following rapidly on each other, and one and all confirming the soundness of my opinions and the accuracy of my forecasts—obliged me, again and again, to return to the charge in the hope that, by constantly re-stating my arguments, and multiplying the proofs on which they were based, I might drive the truth about a Russian invasion of India into men's heads. This is not the place to consider whether those endeavours met with any measure of success, but, at least, the History, at which we continued to work in the intervals between one pamphlet

and another, has been no loser by the study and thought given to its temporary rivals, and I may venture to hope that what those fugitive controversial writings failed to effect, may be attained by the more enduring historical indictment of the Forward Policy presented in the Work of which this volume is the first instalment.

H. B. HANNA.

Ashcroft, Petersfield, May 1899.

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ERRATA

- Page 48, 3rd para., second line, after "Afghanistan", a semi-colon; and fourth line, after "himself", a comma.
- „ 83, 2nd para., last line but one, for "voluntary", read "voluntarily".
- „ 108, line 18, after "light", a semi-colon.
- „ 127, 2nd para., fifth line from bottom, for "Simla", read "Peshawar".
- „ 295, eleventh line of note, for "remarkably", read "remarkable".
- „ 336, third line, for "planw as", read "plan was".

CHAPTER I

BRITISH RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN FROM 1855 TO 1869.

WHEN in 1842 the armies of Pollock and Nott quitted Afghanistan, victorious in the field, but unsuccessful in every object for which a three years' war had been waged—a war in which our troops had experienced every vicissitude of fortune and endured every hardship which nature or man could inflict—a veil of impenetrable darkness fell, for a time, between India and that neighbour whose friendship and alliance she so eagerly coveted that, to gain them, she had spent seventeen millions of money, given the lives of thousands of her bravest troops, and carried fire and sword from Quetta to Kabul, and from the mouth of the Khyber to distant Turkestan.¹

¹ Extract from Report of the East India Committee on the causes and consequences of the First Afghan war, written during its progress:—"This war of robbery is waged by the English Government through the intervention of the Government of India (without the knowledge of England, or of Parliament and the Court of Directors); thereby evading the checks placed by the Constitution on the exercise of the prerogative of the Crown in declaring war. It presents, therefore, a new crime in the annals of nations—a *secret war*! It has been made by a people without their knowledge, against another people who had committed no offence." "Effects on India.—The exhaustion of her

Behind that veil, the authority of Dost Mahomed, the ruler whom we had driven from his throne and, subsequently, sent a captive to India, was restored, and the anarchy which we had created reduced to order by his strong and skilful hand; but no British Envoy stood now at his side, as Sir Alexander Burnes had stood in the days before the war, to exercise an influence on his policy and to keep England informed as to the doings and intentions of her dreaded rival—Russia. It was lifted for a brief space in 1848, when Dost Mahomed, tempted by the hope of recovering Peshawar, despatched Afghan troops to aid his old enemies, the Sikhs, against his more recent enemies, the English; but it fell again when the battle of Gujrat had dissipated that hope and made of the Punjab an Indian Province. ¹

flourishing treasury; complete stop to internal improvement; loss of the lives of fifteen thousand men (loss of camp-followers not known); destruction of fifty thousand camels; abstraction of the circulating medium of the country; loss of at least £13,000,000 (now estimated from £17,000,000 to £20,000,000); permanent increase of the charges on India of £4,500,000; paralización of commerce; diminution of the means of culture, of transport and of revenue; chilling the affections of the native army, and the disposition to enlist; loss of England's character for fair-dealing; loss of her character of success; the Mussulman population is rendered hostile; causes of rebellion developed by the pressure of taxes and the withdrawal of troops, and finally, the other political party in England is committed to the continuation of such deeds, after they are recognised by the people of these islands to be criminal, and after they had brought upon our heads disaster and retribution."

¹ "At the battle of Gujrat 4,000 of the very best men of Afghanistan, the *élite* of Dost Mahomed's army, splendid men,

In 1855, however, the Amir drew it aside with a more friendly hand, and sent his son and heir, Gholab Hyder Khan, to Jamrud to negotiate a treaty with Mr. John Lawrence and Colonel Herbert Edwardes, who had been deputed by Lord Dalhousie to meet him.

The Afghan prince was empowered to ask for assistance in men, money and arms, in case Persia, or Russia, or both combined, were to threaten Herat, then an independent state, but, under the Durani and Sudazai dynasties, a province of Afghanistan, and still an essential bulwark of that Kingdom's independence. But Lawrence had neither the authority, nor the wish to accede to such requests,—he seems, at this time, to have been doubtful of the advantage to India of entering into any dealings with Afghanistan—and the draft treaty which he prepared and which Hyder Khan finally accepted, contained only three articles: the first of which declared that there should be perpetual peace and friendship between the Honourable East India Company and his Highness Dost Mahomed Khan, Wali of Kabul and those countries now in his possession; the second pledged the East India Company to respect those countries and never to interfere in them; and the third bound the Amir and his heirs not only to respect the possessions of the East India Company, but to be the friend of its friends and the enemy of its enemies.

on splendid horses, as they were described by the officers present, commanded by the son and nephews of the Amir in person, were overthrown, beaten to pieces and driven from the field with tremendous loss by 243 Hindustanis of the Sind Irregular Horse, leaving their leaders slain and their standards in the hands of the victors.”—General John Jacob, C. B.

Two years later, in January 1857, Dost Mahomed himself met the same two representatives of the Company at the same place—Jamrud, and, both Governments being then on the eve of war with Persia who, in defiance of all warnings, had just seized Herat, a fresh treaty was concluded between them, by which Dost Mahomed, in exchange for a large subsidy given to enable him to equip and maintain an efficient army, agreed to receive British officers at Kabul, Kandahar, Balkh, or wherever an Afghan army might be established against the Persians, to watch over the application of the money to the purposes for which it was intended ; it being strictly laid down that those officers¹ were to abstain from all interference in the internal affairs of the Amir's Kingdom, and that, on the conclusion of peace, between the Allied Powers and Persia, when the subsidy would cease to be paid, they were to be withdrawn.

This treaty was temporary in its character, except as regards the seventh clause, which was to come into force when all the others expired and which gave to the Indian Government the right to maintain a Vakil, or Native Envoy, permanently at Kabul, and to the Amir a like right to send an Agent to Peshawar for the purpose of keeping each Government well informed as to the position and wishes of the other. To prevent the slightest chance of this provision's ever being used to cover larger demands on the part of India than the Amir intended to concede, it

¹ Major H. B. Lumsden, Lieutenant P. S. Lumsden and Dr. H. W. Bellew. Two native gentlemen, both Durani Afghans, also accompanied the mission.

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was expressly stated that her Envoy was *not* to be a European officer.

The war proved of short duration. Persia sued for peace, one condition of which was her immediate withdrawal from Herat, which province returned, for a time, to a state of anarchical independence. On the termination of hostilities the British subsidy ceased to be paid to Dost Mahomed, the British officers left Kandahar, and a Mahomedan gentleman, Gholam Hussein Khan, went to Kabul as the East India Company's first Native Agent. In May 1863, Dost Mahomed took Herat by storm—the Indian Government having withdrawn its opposition to the reunion of that city with the rest of Afghanistan—and there he died, on the 9th of June of the same year. Before his death, Gholab Hyder Khan having predeceased him, he nominated as his successor his favourite son, Shere Ali, a younger brother of the notorious Akbar Khan, who murdered Sir William MacNaughten at Kabul in December 1841; but this prince's claim was, at once, contested by numerous members of his family, and the Indian Government, remembering the bitter fruits which it had reaped from its former attempt to force a ruler on the Afghan people, abstained, for a time, from recognizing Dost Mahomed's legal heir. It was not till December that Sir William Denison, then acting as Governor-General pending the arrival in India of the new Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, wrote a courteous letter to Shere Ali expressing his sincere hope that under his rule Afghanistan might possess a strong and united Government, and that the good understanding and friendship which had prevailed between that country and India in his father's

time, might gain strength and stability under his own administration.

For more than three years after the despatch of that letter, Shere Ali continued to be regarded as the Ruler of Afghanistan by the Indian Government, which recalled its Vakil, Gholam Hussein Khan, from Kabul on the discovery that he had been intriguing against him; but when in 1867 he was driven to take refuge in Herat, and his half-brother Mahomed Afzul Khan could announce that he was in full possession of the provinces of Kabul and Kandahar—it accepted the latter as *de facto* sovereign of the territory he had won. Yet Sir John Lawrence, whilst congratulating the new Amir, did not conceal the sympathy he felt for the misfortunes of Shere Ali “who had given him,” so he declared, “no cause of offence at any time”; and he dashed to the ground any hope of material countenance and aid which this recognition of his sovereignty might have awakened in Afzul’s breast, by the firm declaration that, should hostilities between him and his brother be renewed, the Indian Government would observe its former policy of strict neutrality. In conclusion Sir John Lawrence proposed, in accordance with the seventh clause of the treaty of 1857, to appoint, if agreeable to the Amir, a Mahomedan gentleman of rank and character to be the British Representative at his court. Afzul Khan signified his willingness to receive an Envoy, and the Viceroy appointed Atta Mahomed Khan, in whose discretion and ability he reposed full confidence, to the post, but the Vakil’s departure from India was postponed from time to time, owing to the unsettled state of things in Afghanistan.

On the 7th of October, 1867, Afzul Khan died, and his

brother Mahomed Azim Khan was acknowledged as his successor, in open Durbar, not only by the assembled chiefs and nobles, but also by his nephew, Abdur Rahman, who must have expected to ascend his father's throne. Again an Amir notified his accession to the Indian Viceroy, and again the Viceroy courteously acknowledged the notification. But the reign of the new ruler was destined to be short; hardly had he been installed when the civil war broke out afresh, and this time fortune favoured Shere Ali, who, by the middle of September 1868, was able to inform Sir John Lawrence that, "by the grace and help of Almighty God his flag had safely reached the metropolis of Kabul."¹

In his reply, dated the 2nd of October, the Viceroy congratulated his Highness on the recovery of his kingdom, advised him to deal leniently with his defeated enemies, and informed him that he—the Viceroy—was not only prepared to maintain the bonds of amity and good will which had existed between Dost Mahomed and the British Government, but so far as might be practicable to strengthen them.

The promise of help implied in these friendly words was soon fulfilled. On the 21st of December the Viceroy authorized the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab to give Shere Ali six lakhs of rupees (rather less, in those days, than sixty thousand pounds), and, in reporting this circumstance to the Secretary of State for India, he expressed the wish that the Indian Government might be empowered to give, at its discretion, to the *de facto* ruler of Afghanistan, arms, ammunition and substantial pecuniary aid.

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 43.

This gift of six lakhs of rupees marks a distinct departure from the former British policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan; for to subsidize one of two claimants to the throne of Kabul, was to espouse that claimant's cause, and virtually to decide for the Afghan people the question of what prince they should acknowledge and obey, so far as it was their custom to render obedience to any prince. There can be little doubt that similar assistance accorded to Azim Khan might have inclined the balance in his favour. That it was denied to him and granted to Shere Ali, indicates that between the accession of the one brother and his supercession by the other, the Viceroy and his Council had been convinced that, in the interests of India, the time had come for anarchy to cease in Afghanistan, and that they believed Shere Ali to be more likely to be able to put an end to it than any of his rivals. Whether, in arriving at these conclusions, they were influenced by Sir Henry Rawlinson's celebrated Memorandum on the Central Asian Question,¹ it is impossible either to assert or deny. Rawlinson himself claims for his able state paper the credit of having determined their policy at this juncture, and, certainly, that document in which he had not only advocated the subsidizing of the Amir of Kabul, but had named Shere Ali as the Amir to be so subsidized, reached Calcutta before the end of September 1868, and the letter recognizing Shere Ali's resumption of the Amirship and holding out hopes of British assistance in strengthening him in his recovered position, was not written till the 2nd of October,

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 31.

so that there was time for the Memorandum to have been considered by the Viceroy in Council before the determination to give aid to Shere Ali was arrived at. Probably the course adopted was the one which Sir John Lawrence had already decided to follow, and the Memorandum's chiming in with his own views led him to put them into execution with greater promptitude than might otherwise have been the case. The general policy of the Indian Government was, however, unchanged by it. The long array of facts which it brought forward to prove the rapidity of Russia's advance in Central Asia, awoke no alarm in the breasts of men who had long been familiar with them and who believed that, whilst that advance was inevitable and likely to continue, it was not, necessarily, inspired by any hostile intentions towards Great Britain; and but few of the "remedial measures" which it advocated with the object of hindering or delaying it, met with their approval. They were willing that the Indian Railway System should be extended so as to facilitate the concentration of troops on the North-West Frontier, and that the British Embassy at Teheran should be removed from the control of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and placed under the Secretary of State for India, but they passed over, in silence, the specific measures by which Rawlinson proposed to counteract Russia's influence in Persia, and they openly condemned his suggestions that a British Mission should be re-established at Kabul, that the Amir's authority should be upheld by a Native contingent officered by Englishmen, and that Quetta should be occupied and fortified—suggestions to which, it is fair to say, their author attached the condition that they should only be acted on,

if the willing consent of the Ruler and People of Afghanistan could first be obtained. The Viceroy and his Council summed up their objections to the policy of the Memorandum, and formulated and justified their own in wise and courageous words :

“We object,” so they declared ; “to any active interference in the affairs of Afghanistan by the deputation of a high British officer with or without a contingent, or by the forcible or amicable occupation of any post, or tract, in that country beyond our own frontier, inasmuch as we think such a measure would, under present circumstances, engender irritation, defiance, and hatred in the minds of the Afghans, without in the least strengthening our power either for attack or defence. We think it impolitic and unwise to decrease any of the difficulties which would be entailed on Russia, if that power seriously thought of invading India, as we should certainly decrease them if we left our own frontier, and met her half way in a difficult country, and, possibly, in the midst of a hostile or exasperated population. We foresee no limits to the expenditure which such a move might require, and we protest against the necessity of having to impose additional taxation on the people of India, who are unwilling, as it is, to bear such pressure for measures which they can both understand and appreciate. And we think that the objects which we have at heart, in common with all interested in India, may be attained by an attitude of readiness and firmness on our frontier, and by giving all our care and expending all our resources for the attainment of practical and sound ends over which we can exercise an effective and immediate control.

"Should a foreign power, such as Russia, ever seriously think of invading India from without, or, what is more probable, of stirring up the elements of disaffection or anarchy within it, our true policy, our strongest security, would then, we conceive, be found to lie in previous abstinence from entanglements at either Cabul, Candahar, or any similar outpost; in full reliance on a compact, highly-equipped, and disciplined army stationed within our own territories, or on our own border; in the contentment, if not in the attachment, of the masses; in the sense of security of title and possession, with which our whole policy is gradually imbuing the minds of the principal Chiefs and the Native aristocracy; in the construction of material works within British India, which enhance the comfort of the people, while they add to our political and military strength; in husbanding our finances and consolidating and multiplying our resources; in quiet preparation for all contingencies, which no Indian statesman should disregard; and in a trust in the rectitude and honesty of our intentions, coupled with the avoidance of all sources of complaint which either invite foreign aggression or stir up restless spirits to domestic revolt."¹

The allusion to the "contingencies which no Indian statesman should disregard" proves that though unaffected by Rawlinson's nervous fear of Russian expansion, the Government of India did not close its eyes to the possibility of difficulties, some day, resulting from it both to Great Britain and to India; and it had not required any warning voice to direct its attention to the matter. A year before the memorandum

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 44.

on the Central Asian question reached Sir John Lawrence, he had written to Sir Stafford Northcote, then Secretary of State for India, pointing out that Russia's influence must soon be as paramount at Samarkand and Bokhara as it already was in Khokand, and had urged her Majesty's Ministers to determine with those of the Czar a line up to which "the relations of the respective Governments should be openly acknowledged and admitted as bringing them into necessary contact and treaty with the tribes and natives on the several sides of such a line."¹

This suggestion had found no acceptance with Sir Stafford Northcote, who was of opinion that Russia's conquests in Central Asia were the natural result of the circumstances in which she found herself placed, and afforded no ground for representations indicative of suspicion or alarm on the part of Great Britain. Now, in this letter of the 4th of January, 1869, the Viceroy and his Council returned to the charge, meeting Sir H. Rawlinson's "remedial measures" directed against Russia with the counter suggestion that "endeavours might be made to come to some clear understanding with the Court of St. Petersburg as to its projects and designs in Central Asia, and that it might be given to understand, in firm but courteous language, that it could not be permitted to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan, or in those of any State which lay contiguous to our frontier."²

This proposal found favour with the Duke of Argyll, who had succeeded Sir Stafford Northcote at the India Office when

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), p. 20.

² Ibid, page 45.

the Disraeli Ministry gave place to that of Mr. Gladstone in December 1868, and, in due time, it bore important fruit.

With his father's kingdom, Shere Ali had inherited his father's desire to have the British Government for a friend and ally. We have seen how, in the letter announcing his victorious return to his capital, he reminded Sir John Lawrence of the relations of friendship and amity subsisting between Dost Mahomed and the Indian Government. Before the end of the year, whilst he still had hard work to maintain his position, he wrote to Mr. R. H. Davies, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, that "but for the hostile proceedings of Mohamed Azim Khan and of Abdur Rahman Khan, which diverted his attention towards them and compelled him to chastise them, he should already have sought a personal interview with the Viceroy."¹

In his reply to this letter, dated 9th of January, 1869, Sir John Lawrence informed the Amir that he was leaving the country, and handing over his high office to his successor, but that the policy he had pursued with regard to the affairs of Afghanistan commanded the assent and approval of her Majesty, the Queen of England, and that as long as he—the Amir—continued by his actions to evince a real desire for the alliance of the British Government he had nothing to apprehend in the way of a change of policy on its part, or of its interference in the internal affairs of his kingdom, though it would lie with each successive administration to determine, year by year, what practical assistance in the way of money and materials of war should be made over to him

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 83,

as a testimony of its goodwill and for the furtherance of his legitimate authority and influence. As an immediate proof of the British Government's desire to see him establish a strong, just and merciful government throughout Afghanistan, Shere Ali was informed that a further sum of six lakhs of rupees, in addition to the six lakhs which he had already received, would, in the course of the next three months, be placed at his disposal, and that for neither gift would the British Government look for any other return than "in abiding confidence, sincerity and good-will."¹

Lord Mayo, the successor to whom Sir John Lawrence alluded in this letter, arrived at Calcutta on the 12th of January, 1869, and proceeded without loss of time, to arrange for that interview between himself, as Head of the Indian Government, and the Amir, which the latter had declared himself to have at heart. Shere Ali responded warmly to the suggestion that he should visit India, and though anxious on account of the critical state of things still prevailing in his kingdom, that the meeting with the Viceroy should take place at some point within easy reach of his frontier—he announced his readiness to go even as far as Calcutta if necessary. He suggested Lahore or Delhi, but Ambala, midway between the two, was the city finally decided upon.

Shere Ali started from Kabul on the 10th of February, leaving his son, Yakub Khan, to make head against his enemies in his absence. On the 3rd of March he reached Peshawar, and Ambala on the 25th. On the 27th the Viceroy also arrived in that city and, the same day, in

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 83.

public Durbar, he bade the Amir welcome to India, in the name of the Queen. On Monday, the 29th, the Amir, in his turn, received the Viceroy, and then, all the necessary ceremonious observances having been fulfilled, there began a series of private interviews between Shere Ali, who was attended by his able and trusted adviser, Syud Nur Mahomed Shah, and Lord Mayo, with whom were the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Mr. Davies; the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Seton-Karr; and Captain Grey, who acted as interpreter. The result of these interviews as embodied in the letter which the Viceroy wrote to Shere Ali at the latter's request, on the 31st of March, can hardly have been satisfactory to that prince. He took back with him as the reward for the risk he had run in leaving Afghanistan before the flames of civil war had been entirely extinguished, no tangible gain of any kind. Lord Mayo had had nothing to offer him but good wishes for his success in tranquillizing his kingdom and consolidating his power; a promise to regard with severe displeasure any attempt on the part of his rivals to disturb his position at Kabul; an assurance that he—the Viceroy—would endeavour, from time to time, by such means as circumstances might require, to strengthen his—the Amir's—Government, so as to enable him to exercise with “equity and justice his rightful rule,” and to transmit to his descendants all the “dignities and honours” of which he was the lawful possessor; and an invitation to communicate freely with the Government of India and its officers on all subjects of public interest.

Never, surely, were vaguer benefits offered to a ruler of whom it was wished to make a friend; yet vague and shadowy

as they were, they were still too strong and definite for the Duke of Argyll who thought that certain expressions in the Viceroy's letter might some day be construed by that prince, or his successors, as meaning more than they were intended to convey, and was anxious that use should be made of any opportunity that might present itself to dissipate any false expectations that might have arisen in Shere Ali's mind.

Lord Mayo was able to assure the Secretary of State that it had been made clear to the Amir in conversation, that the promise to view "with severe displeasure" any attempts that his rivals might make to re-kindle civil war, did not mean that the Indian Government would ever take any armed action against his enemies; that the words "rightful rule" were not to be construed as implying any recognition of his "*de jure*" as well as of his "*de facto*" sovereignty; and that the expression of the wish that he might be enabled to transmit to his descendants all the dignities and honours of which he was the lawful possessor, carried with it no engagement on the part of Great Britain to recognize such descendants, and he, the Viceroy, therefore deprecated as unnecessary and inexpedient the proposal to impress these truths upon him again in writing. Lord Mayo also assured his Grace that during the Conference he had never contemplated giving the Amir annual grants of money, nor of adding to the amount already bestowed upon him by Sir John Lawrence, and he took credit to himself for the firmness he had displayed in resisting the earnest entreaties made to him by many persons of authority, the night before Shere Ali left Ambala, that he would promise his departing guest a large addition to the subsidy.

Yet the reasons by which that request had been supported were very strong, as Lord Mayo honestly admitted. Its advocates pointed out that Azim Khan had levied a year's revenue in advance; that Shere Ali had, therefore, to raise, at once, another half-year's taxes which would cause much poverty and oppression; that the sixty thousand pounds of Sir John Lawrence's allowance, not yet paid, was forestalled; that immediate supplies were necessary for the commencement of the Turkestan campaign; that the policy of support and countenance would not be believed in unless accompanied by a large gift of gold; that the Amir, notwithstanding the present of arms and ammunition which he had received, felt that he was going back empty-handed; and that Yakub Khan and the Sirdars left behind at Kabul, would laugh and say that he had gone on a fruitless errand.

Much of the correspondence which passed between the Duke of Argyll and Lord Mayo, whilst the one was Secretary of State for India and the other Viceroy of India, was of a semi-official character and, therefore, withdrawn from public cognizance, except in so far as the former, for his own purposes, made use of it when writing his book entitled "The Afghan Question." This method of conducting the affairs of a great Dependency may be convenient to the writers, but it has great inconveniences for the British People whom it allows to know only so much of their own business as it may suit the servants they employ to confide to them. The despatch from the Government of India to the Secretary of State, dated Simla, 1st of July, 1869, which has just been dealt with, contains the following important quotation from one of these confidential communications.

“What the Amir is *not* to have:—No treaty; no fixed subsidy; no European troops, officers, or residents; no dynastic pledges. What he *is* to have:—Warm countenance and support, discouragement of his rivals; such material assistance as we may consider absolutely necessary for his immediate wants; and constant friendly communication through our Commissioner at Peshawar and our Native Agent in Afghanistan; he on his part undertaking to do all he can to maintain peace on our frontiers, and to comply with all our wishes in the matter of trade.”¹

“Warm countenance and support” which began and ended in words—and such, except for the gift of arms mentioned above, was the nature of the favour shown to Shere Ali by Lord Mayo—must have seemed to the Amir of very little practical use; but the above passage is not quoted here for the sake of emphasizing the barrenness of the Ambala Conference so far as Shere Ali was concerned, but to call attention to the pledge contained in it that no European officers, or residents, should be stationed in Afghanistan, a pledge which, by some curious confusion of thought, is placed in such connection in the text as to make it appear as if European officers were among the things which the Amir had desired and the Indian Government had denied to him.

Private letters from Lord Mayo to the Duke of Argyll, however, put this matter in its true light. In one, the Viceroy told the Secretary of State for India that he had promised the Amir “that no European officers should be

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 95.

placed as residents in his cities";¹ in another, "that the only pledges given were that we would not interfere in his affairs; that we would not force European officers upon him against his wish";² whilst, to a letter of the 4th of April, he appended certain notes of the conferences of the 1st and 3rd of that month, which showed the extreme jealousy of Shere Ali and his minister, Nur Mahomed, on the subject of European agents of the British Government.

These promises added nothing to the engagements entered into by Sir John Lawrence with Dost Mahomed, but, by confirming them, and still more by offering that confirmation to Shere Ali as a compensation for declining to give him that on which his heart was set—a dynastic guarantee—the Viceroy certainly made them doubly binding on his successors in office and on the British Government.

For this dynastic guarantee the Amir strove and pleaded, urging "that merely to acknowledge the Ruler *pro tem* and *de facto*, was to invite competition for a throne and excite the hopes of all sorts of candidates."³ It was against the rivals of his own house that he desired British assistance, not against external attack. The fear of renewed civil war was ever present to his mind; dread of Russian aggression seems not yet to have crossed it; and Lord Mayo was careful not to exhibit the British Government as suffering from nervous alarms about proceedings to which the Amir did not give a thought."⁴ Nevertheless the desire to put a

¹ The Afghan Question, page 16.

² Ibid., page 55.

³ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 98.

⁴ The Afghan Question, page 44.

formidable obstacle in Russia's path *did* underlie the British Government's wish to see in Afghanistan a strong ruler who should also be Great Britain's friend and ally; and if this was a reasonable and legitimate object at which to aim, it was worth incurring some expense to secure. Lord Mayo shrank from expending a single rupee for this purpose; yet in a private letter to the Duke of Argyll, dated the 7th of July, 1871,¹ he seems to have claimed that his policy was identical with that of Sir John Lawrence—Lawrence who had boldly thrown India's purse into the balance in Shere Ali's favour. What is there in common between the point of view of the man who wrote, "*no doubt it is correct . . . that if we give a subsidy to the Amir he will employ the money for his own purposes and not in the manner we may desire. But, after all, our object must be to strengthen his position and to secure his good will, as the Ruler of the country,*"² and that of him who told the high authorities who were pleading with him to treat Shere Ali with liberality, "*that he wished to force the Amir to spend the sixty thousand pounds still due to him in paying his troops*"?³ And where is the likeness in the policy of the Viceroy who suggested that "*we simply engage to give the Amir a certain sum annually, so long as we are satisfied with his bearing and conduct towards us*" and who thought "*it would not be expedient that this sum should be less than ten or twelve lakhs of rupees,*"⁴ to that of his successor who assured the Secre-

¹ The Afghan Question, pp. 60—61.

² Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 63.

³ Ibid., page 96.

⁴ Ibid., page 66.

tary of State that "*it was expected that the consideration of an annual grant of money might be postponed for the present, and that he and his Council were not without hope that the Amir might be able to maintain his position and carry on his Government without any further assistance from them*"? ¹

On the other hand, Lord Lawrence was even less inclined than Lord Mayo to bind the British Government to Shere Ali by engagements, written or verbal, explicit or implicit. He disliked entanglements of all kinds, and had doubts whether it were possible for a European Government so to word its benevolent intentions towards an Asiatic Prince as to avoid arousing undue expectations in his mind. If he had been the Viceroy to meet Shere Ali at Ambala, though he would have sent him away with full hands instead of empty ones, he would hardly have written him a letter containing friendly phrases about his—the Amir's—"rightful rule," "the severe displeasure" with which the British Government would view the intrigues of his rivals, and its determination to endeavour "to enable him to transmit to his descendants all the dignities and honours of which he was the lawful possessor," for him to appeal to in after days; he would have contented himself with renewing the old pledge to respect the independence and integrity of Afghanistan, and for the rest, have left both sides free, trusting to the ordinary workings of human nature to draw them together in the face of a common danger.

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 99.

But though the Conference of Ambala was in many ways a disappointment to the Amir, it, undoubtedly, left upon his mind the conviction that he had in the British Government a neighbour who honestly wished him well and whom he could trust not to embarrass him with claims which the backward condition of his subjects made it impossible for him to grant; and, strong in that conviction he was able to set himself to the difficult task of re-establishing his authority throughout the provinces bequeathed to him by his father, with a mind free from all anxiety as to the course of events beyond their frontiers.

Indirectly, also, the Conference did strengthen his position, for the news of the magnificent reception accorded to him by the Viceroy soon spread far and wide, accompanied by rumours of the assistance he was to receive from the British Government, and these reports—powerfully aided no doubt by the able generalship of Yakub Khan—sufficed to put an end to the civil war. The army of Azim Khan, which still held Turkestan, dispersed; its leader, Mohamed Ishak Khan, fled, and the chiefs of the country tendered their submission to Shere Ali. Within his tranquillized dominions, the restored sovereign sought to put into practice some of the lessons which his journey to India had taught him. Travelling through the Punjab, a province which only twenty years before had been in that condition of semi-barbarism out of which Afghanistan still showed no signs of emerging—his eyes had been opened to possibilities of prosperity, peace and order, such as he had never dreamed of; and the desire to conduct his government on more civilized principles and to lift his people to a higher level of com-

fort and humanity, thus awakened in his breast, he lost no time in trying to realize. "The Amir from the moment of his return to his own country," so wrote Lord Mayo in July 1869, "has evinced the most fervent desire to comply with the wishes of the British Government as to the administration of his kingdom . . . He has, against all Afghan precedent and doctrine, reconciled himself to many of his opponents. . . . He has evinced a desire to carry out useful administrative and financial reforms in many parts of his kingdom, the accomplishment of which, should he not force them too quickly on his people, on which point we have repeatedly cautioned him, will go far to establish what we so much desire, a strong, just and merciful government in Afghanistan."¹

Doubtless the teachable and conciliatory spirit, to which the Indian Government has here borne testimony, was not due to zeal for reform alone, but also to the conviction that, in improving the condition of his people, he was strengthening his hold on the good-will of the British Government; whilst Lord Mayo's personal influence had much to do with the humanity and clemency with which he surprised both friends and foes. That Viceroy's noble presence, his frank courtesy, his warm-hearted kindness, his lofty views of his own duty towards the peoples and princes of India, above all his truthfulness and sincerity of purpose, undoubtedly impressed and charmed the Afghan Chief, who proved himself possessed of no small magnanimity, in that he was able to dissociate the man from the disappointing policy of

¹ *Afghanistan*, No. 1 (1878), page 99.

which he was the mouth-piece; and the passion and earnestness with which in the evil days that were to come, he appealed to the promises of "my friend, Lord Mayo," were the measure of the confidence which he had reposed in that Viceroy's word.

CHAPTER II

THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA; THE SEISTAN AWARD;

AND THE SIMLA CONFERENCE.

WHILST Shere Ali was striving to carry out the wishes of the Indian Government in the administration of the Kingdom to which he was gradually restoring the limits that had belonged to it under Dost Mahomed, the English Cabinet had approached the Ministers of the Czar with a view to the "recognition of some territory as neutral between the possessions of Great Britain and Russia, which should be their limits, and be scrupulously respected by both Powers."¹

To the form in which the proposal was first clothed, the Imperial Government took exception, but it agreed readily to recognize Afghanistan as a country lying entirely outside Russia's influence, and promised to do its best to make the Amir of Bokhara respect his neighbour's borders, on condition that the Indian Government should keep a restraining hand on Shere Ali and his subjects. But it took much longer to determine what was to be understood by the term *Afghanistan*; indeed, it was not till January 1873, that, through the personal intervention of the Emperor of Russia, his Government yielded to the British contention that it

¹ *Afghanistan*, No. 1 (1878), page 103.

should cover all provinces actually acknowledging Shere Ali's sovereignty, thus abandoning Bokhara's claims to Badakshan and Wakhan.

During the three years occupied by these negotiations, the Indian Government lost no opportunity of commending to the Amir a pacific policy towards all his neighbours, and Shere Ali frankly accepted their advice and loyally acted upon it, even when provoked and tempted to disregard it. Thus, when the Amir of Bokhara invaded Badakshan and burned the town of Jungi Killa, Shere Ali contented himself with ordering his Lieutenant, Mahomed Alum Khan, to act vigorously on the defensive, and forbade him to make any counter attack on Bokhara; and he also abstained from annexing Kerki and Charjui, places which would have added materially to the strength of his northern frontier, and which he ardently desired to possess. Again, when, as not unfrequently happened, overtures were made to him by neighbouring Khans to combine with them against Russia, he firmly declined all such proposals, declaring that there was a treaty between England and Russia, and that so long as the latter country did not interfere with Afghanistan, he would neither make war upon her himself, nor give a refuge to men who had been fighting against her; and yet the very raid into Badakshan mentioned above, was due to intrigues of members of his own family, who, from a safe asylum in Bokhara, a country under Russian protection, were hatching plots to drive him from his throne.

If the conduct of Shere Ali gave the Indian Government no cause of complaint, neither had they any grounds for uneasiness as regarded the policy of Russia, whilst the delin-

itation of Afghanistan was under discussion between the court of St. James and that of St. Petersburg. The influence of General von Kaufmann, Governor-General of Russian Turkestan, averted a repetition of the Amir of Bokhara's wanton invasion of Afghan territory; and when Abdur Rahman wrote to the Russian commander soliciting assistance against his uncle, Shere Ali, his request was refused with the intimation that Afghanistan was under the protection of Great Britain, and that Russia would neither attack the Amir nor suffer Bokhara to do so. Later on, Abdur Rahman was, indeed, received at Tashkent, but Kaufmann was careful to write to Shere Ali to explain away any misconception which this act of hospitality might create in his mind, and assure him that he had no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, because he—the Amir—was under the protection of the English Government which was friendly towards that of the Czar, and because he had abstained from meddling with Bokhara and had given Russia no cause for dissatisfaction.

Strange to say, this friendly letter awoke in the Amir no little anxiety. He could not understand why it should have been written at all; and he misunderstood some expressions which were certainly puzzling enough in the Persian version in which alone he could read it. "What do the Russians mean, by giving as a reason for establishing friendly relations with me, that, up to the present time, I have given them no cause to be angry with me, and by asking for a reply agreeably to their aims?" were questions with which he assailed the Kabul Agent; whilst to the Viceroy he sent Kaufmann's letter with the request that his Excellency would forward

him such a reply for transmission to the Russian general "as may by you be considered appropriate and advisable."¹

In a long letter, written on the 24th June, 1870, Lord Mayo explained to the Amir the passages which had perplexed and alarmed him, and expressed a conviction that "these letters will be, when rightly understood, a source of confidence to your Highness, because they indicate that so long as you continue the course you have so happily pursued since the visit you honoured me with at Ambala, it is most unlikely that your territories will be disturbed by Russia, or by any tribe or state which may be influenced by the officers of the Emperor." He also declared that "these assurances . . . have given to me (the Viceroy) unfeigned satisfaction," and ended with a sketch of the reply which he thought it would be wise of the Amir to send to General Von Kaufmann.²

Since the Viceroy was satisfied, the Amir put away his fears. He wrote an answer in accordance with Lord Mayo's suggestion, and whilst continuing to forward to the Indian authorities each communication which reached him from the Governor-General of Turkestan, with a copy of his answer to it, he left the responsibility of objecting to these letters, if their contents were of a nature to call for objection, to the Indian Government, who saw in them, however, nothing but acts of neighbourly courtesy which violated neither the letter nor the spirit of the engagements Russia had accepted towards Great Britain.

Shere Ali must have been glad to shift the burden of

¹ Central Asia, No. 1 (1878), p. 180.

² Ibid, No. 1 (1878), pp. 184—185.

watching Russia's movements upon Lord Mayo, since he himself had enough to do in keeping his troublesome subjects in order, and in defending his authority against his powerful son Yakub Khan, who at the time of the receipt in Kabul of Kaufmann's first letter, was preparing to take up arms and who, a year later, actually made himself master of Herat. Partly through Lord Mayo's influence, the quarrel between father and son was patched up, for the moment, and Yakub Khan, after he had made his submission to the Amir, was allowed to return to Herat as Governor of that city and province.

Shortly before the tragic death of Lord Mayo that Viceroy obtained Shere Ali's consent to submit to arbitration the question of the ownership of Seistan, a province lying between Persia and Afghanistan, which, up to the death of Nadir Shah in 1747, had formed part of the former Empire, and after that event, was included in the dominions of the Durani Kings of the latter State. When on the death of Timur Shah, Afghanistan fell a prey to civil strife, Seistan lapsed into a state of independence, and such peace as was compatible with the quarrels of the chiefs of the four districts into which it was divided; and independent it remained for forty years, when it was brought under subjection first by the Sudazai ruler of Herat, and next by the Barakzai ruler of Kandahar. From 1834 onwards, it continued a bone of contention between the two rival Houses, till in 1851, Persia, taking advantage of the discontent of its inhabitants, revived her long dormant claim to its allegiance. Lash, one of the four districts mentioned above, was occupied by her in 1856, and though, by the treaty of peace signed with Great Britain in the following year, she was obliged under

protest, to evacuate it, she very soon recommenced her forward movement. Against these aggressive proceedings the British Government for a time steadily protested, pointing out that they were a violation of the Treaty of Paris, and maintaining the rights of Afghanistan in the territories which had been wrested from her; but, at last in 1863, tired apparently of fruitless controversy and doubtful of Afghanistan's power to stand up for her own claims, Lord Russell informed the Persian minister that her Majesty's Government having learned, "that the title to the territory of Seistan was disputed between Persia and Afghanistan, must decline to interfere in the matter, and must leave it to both parties to make good their possession by force of arms."

During the ensuing six years—Afghanistan being fully occupied by the civil war which followed on the death of Dost Mahomed—Persia continued to extend her authority throughout Seistan, destroying forts and levying taxes, as she advanced from point to point, till at last, in 1869, she went so far as to make incursions into Kandahari territory. Shere Ali, true to the pacific promises which he had just made to Lord Mayo, behaved throughout these raids with great forbearance; but he never abandoned his claims to Seistan, and if he consented, later, to submit them to the arbitration of the British Government, it was not that he shrank from vindicating them with the sword,—that oldest of arbiters to which Lord Russell had referred him,—but because he firmly believed that the British Government which had so often admitted their validity, would fully acknowledge and uphold them; more especially as its own interest would be better served by strengthening a kingdom still entirely free from

Russian influence, than an empire in which that influence was already paramount.

A Boundary Commission was appointed at the end of 1871, under the presidency of Sir F. Goldsmid, the arbitrator nominated by the British Government, on which Nur Mahomed, the Amir's principal minister, was the Afghan representative. This Commission spent some time in Seistan, collecting information as to the fertility or sterility of the soil, the course of the rivers, the nationality of the inhabitants, and investigating the past claims and present position of the two rival powers. Some months after the termination of this inquiry, the arbitrator gave his award, which proved to be an attempt to satisfy both parties by dividing the province between them. This compromise, even granting that the rights of Afghanistan were not sufficiently clear to warrant a decision entirely in her favour, was grossly unjust to that State, to which the waterless and barren half of Seistan was allotted, whilst to Persia fell the well-watered and fertile half, part of which, at least, had been seized by her whilst Shere Ali was restraining his people from offering resistance to her aggressions, in deference to the pacific exhortations of the Indian Government. Astonished and indignant, the Amir appealed to the Final Arbitrator, the British Foreign Secretary, and Persia, dissatisfied at having to relinquish any portion of the conquests to which she considered the British Government had given its anticipatory sanction, did the same.

In the early days of the Boundary Commission, Lord Mayo had proposed to send an envoy to Kabul to announce the result of the arbitration, which he probably thought would be favourable to Afghanistan, and to lay

before the Amir some considerations affecting the welfare of his kingdom. Pending the result of the appeal to London, this proposal remained in abeyance, but when on the 7th March, 1873, the Indian Government was informed by telegram that Sir F. Goldsmid's decision had been confirmed, the new Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, thought that the time had come to revive it. He accordingly wrote to the Amir expressing his desire to send Mr. Donald MacNabb, Commissioner of Peshawar, to Kabul for the twofold purpose of explaining to him the details of the Seistan settlement, and the result of the negotiations which had been so long in progress between England and Russia with regard to the boundaries of his dominion.

The news of an intended visit from a British Envoy caused great excitement in Kabul. The diary of the Vakil who was admitted to the meetings of the Durbar, at which, during three days the coming of the "Sahibs" was vehemently discussed, gives a lively picture of the anxiety, the hopes and fears with which Lord Northbrook's proposal was regarded by the Amir's immediate advisers. But the Amir's own answer to Lord Northbrook's letter sent through the Kabul agent, was short, sensible and business-like.—Before receiving an envoy charged to impart to him the details of the Seistan Award, he should like to be informed, in general terms, what decision had been arrived at, and likewise whether in other matters the coming of the Sahibs concerned the prosperity and consolidation of his kingdom?

On the 14th of April, having meantime received an answer to his questions from Mr. Donald MacNabb, who availed himself of the occasion to communicate to the Afghan Government Lord Northbrook's offer of five thousand Enfield

rifles, the Amir again made use of Atta Mahomed's pen to assure the Viceroy that it would afford him much gratification to meet the British officer deputed by his Excellency; nevertheless he should prefer, before receiving him, to send an Afghan agent to India to learn the Viceroy's views on the two points which the Envoy was to be empowered to discuss, and to lay before him his—Shere Ali's—own views as to the interests of the two Governments. If, however, after considering his reasons for desiring an alternative plan, the Viceroy should still think it well to depute an English officer to him at once, or should desire to do so after granting an interview to his Agent, he—the Amir—had no objection to either course.

There was no trace in this official communication, of any reluctance on Shere Ali's part to allow a British officer to enter his dominions, but in the private letter which accompanied it, the Vakil reported that the Durbar officials disliked the idea of an Englishman's being sent to announce the confirmation of the Seistan Award, averring that a refusal to accept it, made point-blank to the Viceroy's representative, in the Amir's capital, might have an unfavourable effect on the friendly relations existing between the two Governments. They feared, too, that the Envoy might meddle in Afghan affairs, by tendering advice as to the conduct to be pursued towards Yakub Khan and other rebellious Sirdars; whilst as regarded boundary matters other than those of Seistan, these were too important to be decided by any lesser authorities than the Amir and the Viceroy in person.

The Indian Government acceded to the Amir's proposal, and Nur Mahomed Shah, who had again been chosen to re-

present his master, was despatched to Simla. Here on the 12th of July, he was received by the Viceroy, who lost no time, in broaching the subject of the arrangement come to between the British and Russian Governments with regard to the northern frontier of Afghanistan, and in giving his reasons for thinking that arrangement advantageous to the Amir. The Russian Government, so Lord Northbrook argued, had indeed, formerly given positive and repeated assurances that it considered Afghanistan to lie completely outside its sphere of influence, and harboured no intentions of interfering in the affairs of that State; now, however, it had gone farther than this, since by accepting the definition of the northern and western boundaries of Afghanistan proposed by the British Government, it had put an end to the danger of differences as to the precise territories to which those assurances had applied.¹ The Viceroy also impressed upon the Envoy that the influence in Afghanistan conceded by the Anglo-Russian agreement to Great Britain, referred to the external relations of that kingdom only; and that on her side, as well as on that of Russia, no interference in its internal affairs was contemplated; the interests of India demanding that it should be both strong and independent. Lord Northbrook then went on to say that, if, in the event of any aggression from without, British influence were invoked and failed by negotiation to effect a satisfactory settlement, it was probable that the British Government would afford the Amir material assistance, in repelling an invader, on the condition of course, that he

¹ *Afghanistan*, No. 1 (1878), page 112.

had followed its advice and had given his neighbours no just cause of quarrel.

The Envoy, in his reply, assured the Viceroy that the Amir and his people were fully aware that the British Government would use its influence in the interests of Afghanistan, and that they entertained no fear of its interfering in their internal affairs; in Russia's assurances, on the other hand, they placed no reliance, and only a promise of aid from the British Government could deliver them from the apprehensions with which they watched her steady advance towards their frontier.

That promise Lord Northbrook had no power to give; he had already stretched his authority to its limits in saying that, under certain circumstances, the British Government would probably assist in the defence of Afghanistan, as a telegram from the Duke of Argyll of the 1st of July, had warned him that "great caution was necessary in assuring the Amir of material assistance which might raise undue and unfounded expectations." Feeling, however, that the Afghan desire for a more definite declaration was not unreasonable, he now telegraphed to the Secretary of State for India asking for permission to promise Shere Ali "money, arms and troops if necessary to repel unprovoked invasion, we to be the judge of the necessity."

Whilst the Viceroy was waiting for the answer to this request, his foreign secretary, Mr. Aitchison, was busy explaining to Nur Mahomed the details of the Scistan Award, and of the Russo-British negotiations. The Afghan minister took no pains to conceal the aversion and resentment with which he regarded the former, and showed great sensitiveness

in regard to the latter ; putting his finger on every doubtful expression in which the seeds of future misunderstandings might lurk ; and even when these had been explained to his satisfaction, he still displayed less appreciation of the advantages secured to Afghanistan by the agreement than the British Government had expected them to inspire. He reiterated his declaration that his countrymen had no faith in Russia's promises whether made to them direct, or through the British Government, and that only their confidence in British support could give them courage to face the not distant future, when, the boundaries of Russia and Afghanistan having met, there would be no lack of border incidents of which the authorities of the former State could avail themselves to pick a quarrel with the latter. That that support would be liberally bestowed, he took for granted on the strength of the promises of Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo ; and it was no easy matter to convince him that, though the latter Viceroy had encouraged the Amir to express his wishes to the Indian authorities, he had reserved to the British Government of the day, the right to fulfil, or reject, them at its pleasure.

When, at last, he had been brought to see that Lord Mayo's warm but vague expressions of friendliness did not justify the hopes which the Amir and his subjects had built upon them, Nur Mahomed declared that, if a new agreement came to be substituted for the old one, Great Britain would have to accept very different engagements towards the Afghan Government, which thenceforward would be satisfied with nothing less than written assurances that the British Government would consider Russia, or any State under her

influence, as an enemy, if guilty of acts of aggression on Afghan territory, and would under such circumstances come to the Amir's aid with money and arms, and, if necessary, with troops, who should be despatched by any route he might indicate, and withdrawn when invasion had been repelled; all this assistance to be rendered freely, "solely out of friendship to Afghanistan, and with the view of protecting the integrity of her position."

That the Amir should be allowed to dictate the movements of British troops was, of course, a preposterous pretension, but there is good reason to think that Nur Mahomed did not put it forward seriously. He had just been witness of the alarm which the bare suggestion of a British officer's visit to Kabul had awakened in that city, and, if he did not altogether share it, he was quite alive to the dangers which would threaten the independence of Afghanistan from the presence of British troops, even if they came into the country for the purpose of defending it against Russia, and it is not likely, therefore, that he really desired to see them enter it by any route, or for any period of time, long or short.

He may have counted on using the rejection of this impossible pretension as an excuse for raising his demands in the matter of money and arms, or he may merely have lost his temper under the irritation caused by Mr. Aitchison's laborious efforts to convince him of the vanity of his expectations of British assistance, and have shown for a moment the jealous pride which is part of the Afghan national character, but which, as a rule, the old and experienced diplomatist knew well how to conceal. Where he was really in earnest, however, was in desiring that any

agreement come to between the two Governments should be a public one, and that Russia should be expressly named in it as the enemy against whose possible aggressions it was directed; and his anxiety on this point was really highly complimentary to Great Britain, since it implied his conviction that Russia would never venture to violate the territory of a State which could count upon British protection, an opinion shared by a good many Englishmen, both then and now.

To this request, so natural in a man whose one aim was to keep his country at peace, and all foreigners at a safe distance from its borders, Mr. Aitchison turned a deaf ear; and when, in a second interview with Lord Northbrook, Nur Mahomed pressed it upon the Viceroy himself, it was only to be told that it was not the custom to make use in diplomatic documents of such words as *enemy* and *enmity*.

This second interview took place on the 26th of July, after the answer of the British Government to Lord Northbrook's telegram had been received at Simla. In that answer the Duke of Argyll intimated that he and his colleagues did not share Shere Ali's alarm with regard to Russia, but that the Viceroy might assure Nur Mahomed that they would maintain their settled policy in favour of Afghanistan, if the Amir abided by their advice in the management of his external affairs.

Not only did the British Cabinet not share Shere Ali's fears, but the Duke of Argyll, at least, had no faith in their reality. He seems to have thought that so little change had come over the Central Asian question during the years that had elapsed since the conference at Ambala, that there was no excuse for the revolution which had, professedly, taken

place in the Amir's mind, as regarded Russia, and that he only simulated anxiety in order to kindle a corresponding feeling in Lord Northbrook's heart, on the strength of which he could wring from him larger concessions than the Indian Government might otherwise be willing to make.

But in 1869, Shere Ali's necessities were even greater than in 1873, and he was equally well aware of the jealousy with which Great Britain watched Russia's every movement; yet he made no attempt to trade upon that jealousy, not even when he had come to realize how little Lord Mayo was willing to concede to his needs, and his straightforward conduct at Ambala ought to acquit him of duplicity at Simla.

Nor was the situation as unchanged as the Duke imagined. Looking simply at the actual advance made by Russia during the years in question, Shere Ali had, perhaps, no great cause for increased uneasiness; but he looked at many other things and was justified, from his point of view, in thinking that his position with regard to her was less secure than he had once supposed it to be. In the first place, he had had years in which to meditate on the discovery that he could not reckon on Great Britain's fears of Russia to insure to him material aid in his efforts to make of his kingdom a really strong State,¹ meditations which must

¹ No assistance of any kind had been accorded to the Amir by Lord Mayo, and the money which up to the time of this Simla Meeting he had been promised by Lord Northbrook, five lakhs of rupees, had been given partly to enable him to improve his administration, and partly as compensation to Afghan subjects who had suffered by the Seistan Award.

have sometimes led him to doubt whether the British Government cared as much for the strength and independence of Afghanistan as it professed to do.

In the second place, he had just learnt that its interest in that strength and independence was not keen enough to hinder the same Government from rendering an award which materially weakened his western frontier, and he argued that, if they had shrunk from defending his cause against Persia, they might be ready to sacrifice it again if ever disputes as to territory were to arise between himself and Russia, and he had to refer them to the same tribunal for settlement.

It was no answer to these anxious questionings to assure him that they had been met, in advance, by the agreement fixing the limits of his territories just concluded between Great Britain and Russia; for, as Nur Mahomed pointed out to Mr. Aitchison, it left the latter Power free to extend her boundaries till they became conterminous with those of Afghanistan, and thus to create a situation fraught with grave perils to the preservation of peace between the two States, perils inherent in the nature and habits of the inhabitants of each. And apart from this risk, over which he might perhaps exercise some modifying influence, what security had Shere Ali that Russia and Great Britain, on whose mutual good-will and harmony the independence of his country had come to depend, might not, at any moment, be brought into collision with each other as a consequence of divergent interests in another continent? The Amir looked further ahead than the Gladstonian administration, and fears which, in the sequel, proved only too well founded, deserved to be treated with consideration and respect. And such treatment

they actually received at the hands of Lord Northbrook who, interpreting the Secretary of State's telegram as sanctioning the proposals of the Indian Government—an interpretation which the Duke of Argyll tells us it was intended to bear¹—did, practically, show himself prepared to concede a great deal of what the Afghan Envoy had asked for.

Of course the promises by which Lord Northbrook offered to bind the British Government were not absolute, or unconditional; nor was the Amir to wait till an invader was at his doors before applying to that Government for assistance. Misunderstandings and disputes always preceded war, and these were to be at once referred to the British Government, which would endeavour to settle the matter and avert hostilities; but if its endeavours to bring about an amicable settlement proved fruitless, then the Amir might count upon it for money, arms and, also in case of necessity, for troops; it reserving to itself the freedom to decide when and how such aid should be rendered, and making the fulfilment of its promises to depend upon the Amir's abstaining from aggression, and accepting its advice in regard to his foreign relations. Not for the purpose of guarding against Russian aggression, but to strengthen the Amir's rule, Lord Northbrook signified his intention of making Shere Ali a present of ten lakhs of rupees in addition to the five already promised; five of the ten to be kept back to pay for the twenty thousand stand of arms for which he had asked. Gifts and promises were alike free; nothing was required of the Amir in return; only, in the memorandum furnished

¹ The Afghanistan Question, page 107.

to Nur Mahomed for communication to his master, the Viceroy pointed out that, looking to the responsibilities which the British Government had now assumed with regard to Afghanistan, it was advisable that a British officer of rank, accompanied by a competent staff, should examine her northern and north-western boundaries, then those of Seistan, and, finally, return to India *viâ* Kabul, so as to have the opportunity of laying before the Amir the views he might have formed with regard to the measures necessary for the security of the entire frontier.

This proposal had emanated from the Kabul Envoy himself, who when asked by Mr. Aitchison whether there would be any use in broaching the subject of British agents in frontier towns, had answered that, "as a friend", he would not advise the British Government to make any such specific proposal to which, from various causes, the Amir and his advisers would still be strongly opposed; and had then gone on to say that to a temporary military mission on the frontier there might be less objection, and that this would serve the double purpose of putting the British Government in possession of all necessary information as to the Afghan boundaries, and of accustoming the Afghan people to the sight of white faces; but he would not answer for the favourable reception of even this modified proposition, and begged earnestly that the fact of his having suggested it, should be kept strictly secret.¹

The Simla Conference began and ended with an interchange of views and wishes; the Kabul Envoy had no authority to

¹ Afghanistan, No. 3 (1879), pp. 14—15.

sign agreements, and the Viceroy felt that some of the points touched upon were of so serious a nature that they could not be settled till he had the opportunity of discussing them with the Amir in person; but, at least, there had been perfect frankness on each side, and Nur Mahomed must have carried back to Kabul the conviction that Lord Northbrook saw the question of the defence of Afghanistan in very much the same light in which it presented itself to him, and that the British Government, even without binding itself by any formal pledge, might be counted on to assist the Afghans in repelling an unprovoked attack upon their country; whilst Lord Northbrook must have been left with an equally strong conviction that India had no reason to fear any Afghan leanings towards Russia. And yet the result of the conference was not that closer accord between the two Governments which it seemed to promise, but rather the reverse.

The Seistan Award, to which Shere Ali had reluctantly submitted, still rankled in his mind with a bitterness which Lord Northbrook's liberality in the matter of money and arms was powerless to assuage; and the suggestion that he should depart from his fixed resolve to admit no British officers into his dominions, turned the gratitude and confidence which that liberality, taken by itself, might have awakened in him, into suspicion and alarm. Whether Nur Mahomed, who, unfortunately, quitted Simla deeply offended by an angry expression used towards him by a British officer, made no efforts to overcome the Amir's jealous sensitiveness in this matter, or whether influences adverse to his own, at which he had hinted in conversation with Mr. Aitchison, proved too strong for him, we have no means of knowing;—what is

certain is that rather than afford the Indian Government an excuse for pressing this hateful proposal upon him, Shere Ali actually abstained from claiming the ten lakhs of rupees which had been transmitted to Kohat for his acceptance. Nor was this proposal the only outcome of the conference to which the Amir took exception; he evidently shared his Envoy's disappointment at the refusal to make the political situation clear and unequivocal by naming Russia as the Power against whose probable encroachments Great Britain was pledging herself to protect Afghanistan; and he noted with contempt the discrepancy between the Indian Government's anxiety to make of his kingdom a buffer between India and Russia, and its exhortations to himself to believe implicitly in the Russian Government's peaceful professions and not to waste his finances on unnecessary military preparations. Nor did the promises of support offered to him in the name of the British Government afford him much satisfaction, coupled as they were, with conditions which, practically, left each successive administration free to keep, or break them, as suited the convenience of the hour. He saw that, in the end, the interest of the British Empire would alone decide when and how help was to be accorded to him, and, seeing this, he failed to appreciate the difference to himself between the promises of Lord Northbrook and those of Lord Mayo. And, in truth, there was, and could be, no real difference between them. The object of the Duke of Argyll in 1873 was the same as that which he had impressed on the last-named Viceroy in 1869—viz., the avoidance of any engagement which should really tie Great Britain's hands and interfere with her freedom to decide, in each

complication that might arise, what line of action she would adopt. Probably there was no British statesman in the ranks of either political party who would have been willing to sign away that freedom, and this being the case, the superiority of Lord Lawrence's Afghan policy to that of his successors becomes apparent.

Recognising, on the one hand, that the independence and integrity of Afghanistan were of importance, though not of vital importance, to India—her security rested for him on far broader and stronger foundations—and, on the other, that the preservation of the former was the ruling passion of the Afghan people, and the maintenance of both the strongest desire of every Afghan Prince, Lawrence was prepared to give Shere Ali, in liberal measure, the means of defending his kingdom and upholding his power, unaccompanied by pledges or conditions of any kind, since pledges and conditions were certain to lead to misunderstandings, and to suspicions and disappointments on both sides. Under this policy, the dispute between Persia and Afghanistan would have been settled by themselves, probably in favour of the latter State, certainly at an infinitesimal cost of life and treasure compared to the expenditure of both which was to flow from the British claim to determine the Amir's conduct towards his neighbours; and there could never have crept into Shere Ali's mind the feeling that he had been duped by fair words, out of which all meaning evaporated the moment he tried to ascertain what they were really worth to him; whilst the Indian Government would have been preserved from the temptation to encroach upon his independence on the plea of defending it. Under this policy, the full responsibility for his actions left to the

Amir would have proved quite as effectual in withholding him from giving wanton offence to Russia, as the desire to merit British aid against her, and nothing in its principle and aims would have debarred the British Government from bestowing that aid, should the rendering of it at any given moment, seem in accord with the best interests of India. Under the policy which Lord Northbrook found in force and had to continue—a policy which is generally supposed to have been identical with that of Lord Lawrence, but which really differed from it fundamentally—it was impossible for that Viceroy altogether to avoid the appearance of taking back with one hand what he gave with the other and if Nur Mahomed, nevertheless, left Simla still convinced that Afghanistan might rely upon the Indian Government to stand by her against Russia in case of need, that conviction did not rest upon the definite promises now offered to his Sovereign, but on that natural community of interests between India and Afghanistan in the presence of an ambitious and rapidly extending neighbour, which had always existed and must, in his opinion, always continue to exist—a community of interests which the pecuniary liberality recommended by Lord Lawrence would have sufficiently recognised and promoted.

The letter written by Shere Ali to Lord Northbrook,¹ after the return of Nur Mahomed to Kabul, which testified to his ruffled temper and sceptical frame of mind, proves conclusively the truth of the above reflections. It began with simple and cordial thanks to the Indian Government

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 119.

for the attention shown to his Envoy at Simla, and then went on in a strain of polite irony—recalling very forcibly to the mind of the student of La Fontaine's Fables the language used by *le vieux coq, adroit et matois*, to express the great joy with which he had heard the good news of the prospect of peace and security reigning in all countries, and of the banishment of inimical expressions from diplomatic correspondence.

To the Seistan Award he alluded with proud displeasure. His Excellency had based a condition which he desired to impose upon him—the Amir—on a stipulation in the Treaty of Paris; had the Seistan question been decided in accordance with that Treaty, there would have been no occasion for any such condition. His Excellency wished him to issue stringent orders to his officers on the frontier to refrain from interference on the Persian border. Such orders, from the commencement (*i.e.*, from the time of the Conference at Ambala) he had issued out of regard to the British Government, now they should be repeated. The proposal to send British officers to inspect his frontiers he ignored, as also the promises on the strength of which the Viceroy had felt justified in urging it, but he noted with gratification “the friendly declaration of your Excellency, that you will maintain towards myself the same policy which was followed by Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo;” adding, with a relapse into irony, that “under this circumstance of the case, it was not necessary to hold all those conversations with Syud Nur Mahomed Shah at Simla. The understanding arrived at in Ambala is quite sufficient.” At the end of the communication, the Amir curtly dismissed a request made to

him through Mr. Donald MacNabb that he would permit Colonel Valentine Baker to return to India from Herat *viâ* Kabul.

There is no denying that this letter, with the exception of its opening sentence, was cold and ungracious; but it would be quite unfair to conclude from it that the Amir had ceased to value the British alliance. By that he held as firmly as before, but in its entirety and as it had been understood by his father and Lord Lawrence, by Lord Mayo and himself. The keynote of his mental attitude is to be found in his declaration that the understanding arrived at at Ambala was sufficient; *not* the promises made to him by Lord Mayo in his memorandum, the vain nature of which had been so carefully explained to Nur Mahomed by Mr. Aitchison, but the understanding at which he and the Viceroy had arrived, after a careful consideration of the interests and circumstances of their respective countries.

That understanding *excluded* all British interference in Afghan affairs, all British officers from Afghanistan, and *included* warm friendship on the part of the British Government towards himself; and on his side, a willingness to be guided by its advice in his foreign relations, and to keep the peace towards all his neighbours. Of course the Amir would have liked that warm friendship to have borne fruits in yearly supplies of money and arms, though he must be acquitted of having asked for either except when invited to do so;—but it was something to feel sure that, in the moment of danger, it could be relied on not to leave him in the lurch, and this assurance, notwithstanding Mr. Aitchison's warnings and explanations, he still possessed—for

were not the frontiers of Afghanistan virtually the frontiers of India, and was not Russia regarded with as much suspicion in London and Simla as in Kabul itself? The idea that so long as he did nothing contrary to the engagements he had accepted towards the British Government, that Government would abandon its "settled policy towards Afghanistan" and seek the advantage of its Indian Empire in rectifying its frontier at his expense, instead of in defending his kingdom against the common foe, had not at this time crossed his mind, his worst suspicions never having gone beyond a doubt lest it might prove itself weak and yielding in negotiating with that foe.

Shere Ali, as we have said, had ended his letter to the Viceroy with a refusal to allow an English officer to pass through his dominions. The form of this refusal, not the substance of it—for Lord Northbrook never disputed the Amir's right to exclude Englishmen from his territories—was visited by the Viceroy with gentle censure, as also the omission of all mention of the promises of the British Government and the request which had sprung out of them. Shere Ali replied on the 10th April, 1874, reiterating his declaration that the arrangements made by Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo were sufficient, and expressing his earnest hope that Lord Northbrook would remain "firm and constant" to his predecessor's policy, "in order that Afghanistan and its territories might be maintained inviolate and secure." As regarded the Baker incident, he offered the excuse—unfortunately a true one—that his people were "rude mountaineers," implying that to travel among them was to court danger; and he justified a similar refusal to allow Mr Forsyth to pass through his

dominions on his way from Yarkand to India, by pointing to the disturbed state of the country owing to the attitude of his son, Yakub Khan, who was once more threatening to rise in arms against him.

This hostile attitude was the natural consequence of a step which the Amir had taken on the 22nd of November, 1873. On that day, in fulfilment, so he informed the Viceroy, of "a unanimous representation" made to him by "certain of the chief personages of the State and officers of the Government", Shere Ali had "honoured and exalted Sirdar Abdullah Jan (his youngest son) with the title of heir apparent."¹ This important act was communicated to the Government of India on the 30th of the same month, and on the 21st of January, 1874, the Viceroy made a brief but suitable reply to the announcement, expressing the hope that his Highness might still enjoy many years of life and good health, and that his heir might learn, under his tuition, to conduct the government with wisdom and success; but he offered no congratulations on an appointment of which he could not approve, and which might lead to a state of things in Afghanistan very injurious to British interests. Lord Northbrook's foreboding, as we have seen, was quickly fulfilled; Yakub Khan, indignant at his younger brother's being preferred before him, began at once to strengthen the defences of Herat; but, after a time, running short of money and finding himself unable to pay the large number of troops that he had collected, he became anxious to come once again to terms with his father. On a promise

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 118.

of safe conduct given to him by two of the Amir's officers, who had been sent to Herat to confer with him, he accompanied them to Kabul, where, after some days of apparent friendliness, he was seized and thrown into prison.

Shocked at this violation of a prince's plighted word, and alarmed lest such treatment of his ablest son should alienate from Shere Ali many of his Sirdars,—Lord Northbrook instructed Atta Mahomed, the Native Envoy at Kabul, to tell the Amir that, "as his friend and well-wisher," he, the Viceroy, trusted the report of Yakub Khan's arrest was untrue, and that he desired strongly to urge upon his Highness the observance of the conditions under which his son had come to Kabul. By so doing he would maintain his good name and the friendship of the British Government.¹

This message, with its veiled threat of the withdrawal of the British Government's support, was resented by the Amir and his advisers, not merely as a violation of the often renewed promise not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, but also as an unjustifiable meddling with a strictly family matter. The chief members of the Durbar told the Agent of the Indian Government that there was not "room for the fulfilment of conditions and stipulations between son and father"; whilst the Amir, himself, though willing to admit that the Viceroy's recommendation was "based on friendship and well-wishing," rebuked his interference on behalf of a son, "whose misdeeds he was ashamed to repeat," with the sarcastic remark that "sincere and intelligent friends do not like under any circumstances to put

¹ Afghanistan, No 1 (1878), page 126.

their faithful friends to such shame," and denied the right of the British Government to withdraw its friendship from him, so long as he was guilty of no violation of his engagement with it. ¹

Lord Northbrook seems to have taken this rebuff in good part; at any rate, he made no farther attempt to procure the release of Yakub Khan; maintained the old friendship with the Amir on the old terms, and before many months had elapsed, was defending it and them, with warmth and force, against an attack from a most unexpected quarter.

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 127.

CHAPTER III

SIR BARTLE FRERE'S MEMORANDUM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

It was shown in the preceding chapter that Shere Ali's uneasiness as to his own and his country's future had not been laid to rest by the Russo-British agreement, settling the limits of his dominions. The boundaries fixed included, indeed, all that he could justly claim, but who was to guarantee them against violation on the part of Russia, if ever she and Great Britain ceased to be on friendly terms? This was a risk easy to forecast, and the Amir's consciousness of it found expression in his eagerness to obtain from the Indian Government those definite and public promises of support against invasion which would, as he believed, suffice to hold his Northern neighbour's ambitions in check; but that the other party to the delimitation agreement—Great Britain herself—should plot against the independence of Afghanistan, and should do so whilst no change had as yet passed over the relations subsisting between her and Russia, was a contingency so at variance with the sentiments of confidence in British good faith with which Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo had inspired his father and himself, that even Afghan suspiciousness failed to foresee it. Yet this undreamed of danger was actually hanging over him during the last year of Lord Northbrook's tenure of office, though the first intimation of

it only reached him after that viceroy had given place to Lord Lytton.

On the 12th of June, 1874, Sir Bartle Frere, Ex-Governor of Bombay and Member of the Indian Council, addressed a letter to Sir John Kaye, Secretary of the Foreign Department of the India Office, in which he revived Sir H. Rawlinson's recommendations that English agencies should be established in Afghanistan, and that Quetta should be occupied and converted into a strong military post, whilst omitting the condition on which their original author made their realization to depend. Boldly setting aside all scruples based upon the plighted word of three successive viceroys, he not only urged the British Government to take these steps, with or without the Amir's consent, but to depute at once, to Herat, from the Persian side, a military officer with three or four good assistants, and to convert this temporary mission into a permanent one, if the Ruler of that city could be brought to consent to such a measure—that Ruler being Shere Ali's rebellious son, Yakub Khan, who was thus to be encouraged to look upon himself as an independent prince, and to persist in setting his father's authority at defiance:—in other words Frere asked Her Majesty's Ministers to reverse the policy adopted by the Indian Government in 1857 when, under Lord Canning's wise headship, it withdrew its long sustained opposition to the reunion of Herat to Kabul and Kandahar,¹ and to split up with their

¹ "If upon recovering Herat from Persia, we set it up as an independent State, my belief is, that we shall set up a sham which we shall not be able to sustain. I do not share the

own hands the kingdom, the unity of which they were so concerned to defend against the supposed designs of Russia; whilst he justified these acts of bad faith, in advance, by the contention that Shere Ali's probable unwillingness to release us from our engagements towards him, might justly be interpreted as a sign of his bad feeling towards us.

opinion that there is danger or trouble to British India in the consolidation of the Afghan nation. On the contrary, I believe we cannot encourage that consolidation too much. The Afghans themselves, even if united, can never be formidable to the British power, if only we will deal wisely with them. Their strength as aggressors ceased to be any reasonable source of alarm to us from the time when the plain of Peshawar and the Trans-Indus Valley passed away from them, and the Sikhs no longer intervened between us. *Now that a wise foresight has fixed our boundary at the foot of their own impassable mountains, leaving no room for a single battalion to deploy against us, we stand in a position of security as regards aggression from that quarter, which, I venture to think, calls for a change of policy* Instead of being content that Afghanistan should continue divided, and thereby weak for offence, I would desire to see it united and strong; a compact barrier in our front. By encouraging this as far as lies in our power, at all events by not opposing it, we have a far better chance of extending our influence across the breadth of Afghanistan up to Herat than by laying down, as a condition, that Herat shall be maintained in its own state of independence. That it should be independent of Persia, we may rightly claim, for Herat is Afghan, and not Persian. But that it must be independent of the chief authority at Kabul, I would not require, or even concede. I would concede it no more than I would concede the pretension now put forward by the Shah, that Kandahar must be independent of that authority."—Lord Canning's Minute relating to the Agreement with Afghanistan in 1857.

This letter called forth a vigorous protest from Lord Lawrence, to which, on the 11th of January, 1875, Sir Bartle Frere replied, recapitulating and defending the policy on which he wished to see Great Britain embark. Eleven days later the first step towards giving effect to his recommendations was taken, when Lord Salisbury, then Secretary of State for India, without officially or unofficially communicating this second letter to the Indian Government,—the first he had sent privately to Lord Northbrook—addressed a Secret Despatch to the Viceroy, in which he intimated that, although no immediate danger from Russia's progress in Central Asia threatened British interests in those regions, yet the aspect of affairs in Europe was sufficiently grave to inspire solicitude and to suggest the necessity of timely precaution—the precaution suggested being the establishment of a British Agency at Herat, to be followed up by a similar arrangement at Kandahar, with the eventual prospect of a third at Kabul, though, for the time being, in deference to the certain opposition of its fanatical population, the Afghan capital was to be spared the presence of a European envoy. The meagreness and doubtful veracity of the information received from the Vakil in Kabul, was the excuse offered for this proposal, the startling nature of which it was sought to disguise by the assertion that, "if the Amir's intentions were still loyal," he could not object to it, as "more than once in former years he had expressed his readiness to permit the presence of an agent at Herat;" and by the assurance, of which Lord Northbrook was directed to make use in his communications with Shere Ali, that it was in the interest

of Afghanistan herself that her Government was asked to agree to such a revolution in her relations with Great Britain.¹

This despatch was received in Calcutta by the middle of February, and on the 18th of that month the Viceroy replied by telegraph, that, in his opinion, time and circumstance were unsuitable for taking the steps proposed; that there were no records in the Indian Foreign Department to show that the Amir had ever agreed to the presence of a British Agent at Herat, and that if he—Shere Ali—were now to object to such an arrangement, his refusal would be no proof of disloyal intentions.

The bluntness of the denial given by this message to the Secretary of State's facts and deductions, seems to have staggered the British Government, which made no immediate answer to the inquiry whether its instructions were to be carried out at once, or whether a discretion was to be left to the Government of India with respect to time and opportunity. This delay was utilized by the Viceroy in tracing to its source the impression that Shere Ali had, at one time, been prepared to allow European Agents at Kandahar, Herat and Balkh; and in submitting to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, and through him, to the most experienced of his officers, the following questions:—

1st. Will Shere Ali, in your opinion, willingly consent to the appointment of British Officers as Residents at Herat and Kandahar, or elsewhere?

2nd. Will the presence of such Residents at either place be advantageous to the British Government?

¹ Afghanistan, No 1 (1878), pp. 128—129.

3rd. Are you satisfied with the sufficiency and accuracy of the intelligence furnished by the Native Agent at Kabul, and, if not, can you suggest any way of procuring more accurate intelligence?

The report as to the Amir's former attitude towards the British Agent question proved, so far as Lord Northbrook investigated it, to rest upon the authority of two persons only—Captain Grey who acted as Interpreter at the Ambala Conference, and Mr. Girdlestone who in 1869 was Under-Secretary to the Indian Foreign Department; but as additional witnesses in support of it were forthcoming later on, it will be convenient, at this point, to examine and weigh all the evidence which could be adduced in its favour.

Captain Grey, relying on notes of the discussions at Ambala between Nur Mahomed and the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Seton-Karr, taken by himself at the time, vouched for the former's having said, that, as a precaution against Russia, the Amir would gladly see an Agent, or Engineer Superintendent in Balkh, Herat, or anywhere but actually in Kabul, and also for the Amir's having, a few days later, expressed his willingness to receive an Envoy, as soon as things had settled down in Afghanistan, anywhere except in his capital.

Mr. Girdlestone in a Note dated March 26, 1869, had recorded a similar recollection.

Dr. Bellew, an old acquaintance of Shere Ali's, and Medical Officer to that prince's escort in 1869, had, at that time, received the impression that the Amir would gladly see Agents at Herat and Kandahar.

Colonel Burne, who claimed to have been in Lord Mayo's full confidence, corroborated all that Captain Grey and Dr.

Bellew had said as to the willingness of the Amir at Ambala to consider the subject of British agencies in Afghanistan, had he received encouragement to enter officially into the subject and had his expectations of being granted a new treaty been fulfilled. "The same evidence," so wrote this witness, "which certified to Shere Ali's desire for a treaty, certified to his willingness to receive British Agents I can testify to the fact that the Viceroy and those associated with him accepted the evidence of the Amir's wishes, in both cases, as genuine."¹

On the other hand, Mr. Seton-Karr, in conversation with whom Nur Mahomed was said to have used the words reported by Captain Grey, when appealed to on the point, declared that neither the Amir, nor his Minister, ever expressed a willingness to receive British officers as Residents in any Afghan city; Mr. Girdlestone when asked to give his authority for the opinion contained in his note of the 26th of March, 1869, could only say that he thought he had formed it on information furnished to him either by Major Pollock, or by Mr. Thornton—neither of whom was able to confirm his recollections; Dr. Bellew's testimony was very vague—a mere impression, and he did not say from whom he had derived it; and the emphatic declaration of Colonel Burne, who claimed to be in Lord Mayo's full confidence, was contradicted by the whole tenor of that Viceroy's public and private correspondence with the Duke of Argyll, both during and after the Ambala Conference.

And what was the evidence of which Colonel Burne wrote

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 174.

as certifying both to Shere Ali's desire for a treaty and to his readiness to receive British agents—that evidence which he declared Lord Mayo had accepted as genuine? It was that of an Afghan spy, whose identity is still hidden behind the initials X. Y., and who seems to have played the eaves-dropper so effectually that he was not only able to supply the Indian Government with accounts of discussions that took place between the Amir and his councillors at Kabul, Lahore and Ambala, but to repeat Shere Ali's private conversations with Nur Mahomed at which no third person was present. Now, this source is tainted in itself, and from its very nature, incapable of corroboration; yet even this witness, when questioned in 1875, was obliged to confess that so far as he had been able to ascertain at Ambala “it was the belief of the Amir's councillors that he never agreed to the location of British agents in Afghanistan.”¹

It will be seen that the evidence with regard to the disposition of the Amir towards British agents, military or political, in the spring of 1869, is very conflicting, and accepting the good faith of the witnesses on both sides, with the exception of the Afghan spy, it comes to be a question of probabilities:—who is most likely to have noted accurately and remembered clearly—Mr. Seton-Karr or Captain Grey, Lord Mayo or Colonel Burne? and as the answers are certain to differ, the question is one which admits of no settlement. Fortunately, however, it needs none. Whatever opinions Shere Ali may have expressed in his secret consultations with his ministers; whatever concessions he may have been prepared

¹ Afghanistan, No 1 (1878), p. 144.

to make in exchange for a treaty guaranteeing his own and his heirs' right to the Afghan throne, at a moment when his hold on it was hardly secure from day to day—the only agreement to which British statesmen could justly hold him bound, was to that finally arrived at between him and the Indian Government, which we find embodied in Lord Mayo's despatch of the 1st of July, 1869, and elucidated in the Viceroy's private correspondence with the Duke of Argyll; and the only excuse to be offered for devoting so much time to a matter which ought to have had no political importance, is that such importance was afterwards, most unfairly, attributed to it.

To the first of the three questions laid by the Indian Government before the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab and his officers, the answer returned was unanimous: Mr. H. Davies himself; Colonel Sir R. Pollock, Commissioner of Peshawar; Major-General R. Taylor, Commissioner of Amritsar; Lieutenant-Colonel Munro, officiating Commissioner of the Derajat Division; Captain Cavagnari, officiating Deputy-Commissioner of Peshawar; and Mr. T. H. Thornton, Secretary to the Punjab Government, all agreed that the appointment of British Officers, as Residents at Kandahar, Herat, or elsewhere, would be distasteful to the Amir and that he would not willingly consent to such a measure.

As regarded the second question—the Lieutenant-Governor thought that harm both to the Amir and the British Government would result from the presence of British Residents in Afghanistan; Pollock, assuming that the officers would be in the Amir's dominions against his wish, was certain that nothing would be gained by sending them to either of the places specified; Taylor, after much weighing

of *pros* and *cons*, ended with avowing the belief that it would be a deeply unwise act to force European Residents upon the Amir, and strongly deprecated the placing of officers in positions where they might be exposed to injuries which it would be a grievous misfortune to India to have to avenge. Munro was evidently too convinced of the futility of asking the Amir's consent to a measure which even the Sirdars most friendly to him would not sanction, to waste time in considering its possible advantages; and Cavagnari, though eloquent on the subject of the benefits that might accrue from it to all parties, had to admit that, if the Amir did not willingly assent to the measure, it would probably be productive of very evil results. Everything would be done to thwart the envoy, and not unlikely some sort of insult would be offered to him which would either necessitate his being withdrawn, or supported in his position by force of arms. Lastly, Mr. Thornton gave it as his opinion that the deputation of British Officers into Afghanistan would probably lead to grave embarrassments:—here again, practical unanimity.

The third question was variously answered.

Mr. Davies thought the diaries of the Vakil, for the most part correct; approved of his reticence with regard to the internal affairs of Afghanistan; and desired no innovation on the existing system, believing that if Herat should ever be threatened, the British Government would hear of the danger quickly enough from the Amir himself.

Sir R. Pollock, whilst doubting whether the sufficiency of the Vakil's information was equal to its accuracy, thought that any Native Envoy who should attempt to report all

that he believed to be correct, would very shortly find his position unbearable; and could only suggest that the Vakil's diaries should be supplemented and checked by the occasional employment of other agents..

Munro, who in the first instance, wrote rather slightly of the intelligence received through Atta Mahomed, in a later note, quoted the Nawab Foujdar Khan in support of the opinion that that intelligence was generally to be relied on, much of it being obtained from independent sources, and *not* from the Amir.

Cavagnari declared that it was notorious that only such information as the Amir approved of was furnished to the Indian Government by its Native Agent at Kabul, and set even more value than Sir R. Pollock on news received from special agents deputed occasionally to Afghanistan.

Mr. Thornton was satisfied with the accuracy, but not with the sufficiency of the Vakil's reports; and General Taylor passed over the third question altogether.

Strengthened by these expressions of opinion in favour of the maintenance of things as they were, the Government of India addressed on the 7th of June, a letter to the Marquis of Salisbury in which it sustained and enforced the views already communicated to him by telegraph; vindicating Atta Mahomed against the charge of supineness and untrustworthiness; sweeping away the sanguine expectations founded by the Indian Secretary on Shere Ali's supposed willingness, in the past, to receive British Officers; and vigorously disputing the conclusion which Lord Salisbury had shown himself prepared to draw from any dislike of the same proposal which he might display in the future. Lord Northbrook and his Council were ready to admit that the presence of a British

Agent at Herat would be an excellent thing, if he were there with the Amir's cordial consent; but they maintained that nothing but evil could flow from it, if that consent were withheld, since either the British Government must accept Shere Ali's refusal without altering its policy towards him—a course which might encourage him to disregard its wishes in other matters—or else, treating it as a sign of unfriendly feeling on his part, it must withdraw from him its assurances of support. In either case British influence in Afghanistan must suffer; in the latter, a grave injustice would, probably, be committed, for reluctance to accede to British wishes on this one point, the point of all others on which Afghan feeling was known to be sensitive, would not prove Shere Ali disloyal to the British alliance. It was true that his language after the Simla Conference had been unsatisfactory, but Sir R. Pollock, whose intimate acquaintance with Nur Mahomed Shah gave him the best means of forming a correct judgment of the Simla negotiations, and who, in 1874, had obtained confidential information as to the sentiments of the Amir—had stated his conviction that no unfavourable change whatever had taken place in them; and the Indian Government itself could testify to the fact that, since the Ambala Conference, Shere Ali had never shown any disposition to neglect its advice as to the external affairs of Afghanistan, and that he had accepted fully, though reluctantly, the Seistan Award, by which there was every reason to believe he would abide.

But if they were right in their opinion of the Amir's attitude towards the British alliance, so Lord Northbrook and his Council went on to argue, then the main object

of the policy which had been pursued uninterruptedly since the days of Lord Canning up to the present hour, was secured—a strong Afghanistan, over whose ruler British influence was powerful enough to keep him from aggression upon his neighbours. An opportunity for closer relations would, probably, present itself in course of time, and Great Britain should be ready to take advantage of it when it occurred. A Russian advance upon Merv might render it desirable for England to enter into a treaty engagement with the Afghan Government, and the establishment of a British agent at Herat would be the natural consequence of such an engagement. Nothing would be gained by taking any specific measures until Merv had been occupied; but the more clearly Russia was given to understand the position which Great Britain had assumed towards Afghanistan, the better it would be for the maintenance of peace.

In conclusion, the Viceroy and his Council defended themselves against the assumption that in commending to Her Majesty's Government a steady adherence to the old patient and conciliatory policy towards Afghanistan, and in making every reasonable allowance for the difficulties of the Amir, they were to be supposed to imply a willingness to concede every caprice of that prince; and they instanced their recent conduct in sending gifts to the Mir of Wakhan, a vassal of the Amir's, as a proof of their ability to hold their own against him when they felt justified in opposing his pretensions.¹

¹ The Council that signed this letter consisted of Lord Napier of Magdala, H. W. Norman, Arthur Hobhouse, W. Muir and A. Eden.

Lord Salisbury's rejoinder to this communication was not written till the 19th of November. It began with the assurance that he had carefully considered the despatch and the papers accompanying it, and then went on to sum up its conclusions in words which expressed a meaning exactly the opposite of that which its authors had intended to convey. The Indian Government and its "able officers" were made to declare that they had no doubt as to the insufficiency of the information which they were in the habit of receiving from Afghanistan, and the Viceroy was represented as favourable to the immediate deputation of a British Officer to Herat, though, incidentally, he had raised for the consideration of Her Majesty's Government the point whether the advantages to be gained by the arrangement were such as to justify efforts being made to obtain the Amir's concurrence in that step.

Lord Salisbury then went on to set aside the testimony borne by "his Excellency and his most experienced officers" to the loyalty of the Amir, as not worthy to be weighed against "the well-known peculiarities of the Afghan character;" and to cast doubt on the assurance that Shere Ali had always abstained from aggression on his neighbours, by a reference to certain military operations recently undertaken by him, which suggested that the contingency of collision between his forces and those of Russia, or of the allies of Russia, must not be left out of account, and by the assertion that the Amir had "never shown any disposition to seek peace by abating a doubtful claim." He argued also that, "even if Shere Ali's loyalty could be reckoned on for an indefinite period," the oppressive character of his Government might,

at any time, lead to a revolt against his authority, which would open a field "for foreign intrigue dangerous alike to his power and to the interest of Great Britain."

All such evils, however, would lose their formidable character "if warnings could be given to the Indian Government, or advice tendered to the Amir in good time;" and Lord Salisbury persisted in clinging to his happy conviction that Shere Ali's consent to the appointment of British Agents in his dominions might be won, if he could be led to take a juster estimate of his position, a task to which Indian diplomatists, who "had often triumphed over more stubborn prejudices," would surely prove equal. The first step therefore was to bring an Indian diplomatist's influence to bear on him without delay, and, to effect this the more easily, the Viceroy was advised to conceal, for the present, his intention of establishing a permanent British Mission in Afghanistan, and to give to the Embassy which he was now instructed to send, some ostensible object of smaller political interest which it would not be difficult to find, or, if need be, to create. The Envoy selected was "not to depart from the amicable tone in which intercourse with the Amir had hitherto been conducted"—for was it not one of the main objects of his mission to leave on Shere Ali's mind an undoubted impression of the friendly feeling of the British Government towards him?—but, maintaining this tone, he was to impress earnestly upon the Amir the risk he would run if he should impede the course of action which that Government thought necessary for securing his independence.¹

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pp. 147—149.

The astonishment with which the Viceroy and his Council must have read the first part of this despatch, could only have been surpassed by the anxiety which its concluding paragraph could not fail to inspire in men, on whom it threw the duty of carrying out instructions so contrary to their ideas of what both good policy and good faith demanded of them. Once again, but this time with waning hope, they laid bare the errors which underlay Lord Salisbury's assertions and vitiated his conclusions, and reiterated their own views as to our relations with Afghanistan, firmly repudiating the false construction which had been put on their former expression of them. They had *not* stated that they entertained no doubt as to the insufficiency of the intelligence furnished by the Vakil, nor hinted that he reported only what the Amir wished him to report,—on the contrary, they had expressed their belief that he withheld no information of importance, and that such information as he did impart was fairly full and accurate; whilst so far from having desired it to be understood that they shared the Secretary of State's eagerness to see a British officer at Herat, they had strongly deprecated the mere mooted of such a proposal, which they knew would be most unwelcome to the Amir. To that opinion they still adhered; but in view of the positive instructions now received, they had consulted with Mr. Davies and Sir R. Pollock as to the steps to be taken to carry out the British Government's wishes, and had come to the conclusion that, if a Mission were to be sent at all, its real purpose should be frankly and fully stated to the Amir, who was shrewd enough to know that Special Missions were not sent to discuss matters of minor political importance.

This difference of opinion as to the initial steps to be taken to bring about more intimate relations with Afghanistan was, in itself, a sufficient reason why the Indian Government should refer the whole matter back again to the British Government for further explanation; but other questions, certain to arise, rendered this reference still more imperative. Were Her Majesty's Ministers prepared to give unconditional assurances of their determination to protect the territories of Afghanistan against external attack; and, if the Amir should apply for assistance in fortifying Herat and in improving his army, to what extent should his demands be complied with? In the Viceroy's opinion the Amir's demands were likely to prove large, for his objections to British officers were very strong, and his expectations of pecuniary aid, as had been shown at Simla, very high. And by what arguments was the Indian Government to try to overcome that repugnance? Lord Salisbury had written of the Amir's independence being in serious peril, and of the possibility of neutralizing that peril by the personal influence of a British agent; but from what quarter was danger supposed to threaten? Was it the Russians who were to be represented as eager to invade Afghanistan, or the Amir who was to be charged with conduct calculated to bring him into collision with Russia or her allies? The Indian Government possessed no information confirmatory of the former line of argument; and, having only recently been the channel of communication through which the Amir had been assured that he had nothing to fear from Russia, and might devote his entire attention to the improvement of his internal government, they felt some

difficulty in making to him representations of an opposite character.

Neither did Lord Northbrook and his council share, to the full extent, Lord Salisbury's apprehensions that Great Britain's interests were in danger from the misgovernment of the Amir, or from his ambitious proclivities. Discontent there might be in Afghanistan, but there could be no doubt that Shere Ali had consolidated his power throughout its length and breadth, and that the officers intrusted with its administration had shown extraordinary loyalty to his cause. Nowhere had intrigue, or rebellion, been able to make head against his authority; even the wildest tribes were learning to appreciate the advantages of a firm rule; and any attempt on the part of Russia to intrigue with factions opposed to the settled government would defeat itself, and afford the Amir the strongest motive for disclosing to us such proceedings. As to the contingency of a collision with Russia being brought about by Shere Ali's ambition, negligence, or over-confidence—they thought that the British Government hardly did justice to the Amir's past conduct, which had been marked by the most unqualified acceptance of the advice offered him by the Indian Government. Never, in all the years that had elapsed since the Ambala Conference, had he deviated from the peaceful attitude towards his neighbours which had then been enjoined upon him. Even so recently as the previous September, when news of the disturbances in Khokand had reached Kabul, he had written to the Governor of Afghan Turkestan to exercise such restraint upon his people that no act contrary to the friendship existing between Afghanistan and Russia might take

place; and the military movements which had aroused Lord Salisbury's alarm had been directed against a rebellious Afghan chief whose reduction to obedience was a purely domestic matter, with which the Indian Government had no right to intermeddle, and, yet, the Amir had gone beyond his obligations in notifying to it his intentions before entering on hostilities, and in, afterwards, keeping it informed of their progress.

The despatch closed with a few remarks which the Viceroy and his Council, deeply impressed by the grave importance of the subject with which they were dealing, submitted to the consideration of Her Majesty's Government, "in the hope that the whole question might yet be reconsidered;"—remarks which sum up with firm and comprehensive grasp all the arguments against the measure which they now found themselves called upon to force on the Amir.

"It is in the highest degree improbable that the Amir will yield a hearty consent to the location of British Officers in Afghanistan which the Mission is intended to accomplish; and to place our Officers on the Amir's frontier without his hearty consent would, in our opinion, be a most impolitic and dangerous movement. Setting aside the consideration of the personal risk to which, under such circumstances, the Agents would be exposed, and the serious political consequences that would ensue from their being insulted or attacked, their position would be entirely useless. They would be surrounded by spies under the pretext of guarding them or administering to their wants. Persons approaching or visiting them would be watched and removed; and though nothing might be done ostensibly which could be complained of as

an actual breach of friendship, the Agents would be checked on every hand, and would soon find their position both humiliating and useless. Such was the experience of Major Todd at Herat in 1839 when his supplies of money failed. Such was the experience of Colonel Lumsden when he went to Candahar in 1857, as the dispenser of a magnificent subsidy.

A condition of things like this could not exist for any length of time without leading to altered relations, and possibly even, in the long run, to a rupture with Afghanistan, and thereby defeating the object which Her Majesty's Government have in view. We already see the fruits of the conciliatory policy which has been pursued since 1869, in the consolidation of the Amir's power and the establishment of a strong Government on our frontier. The Amir's not unnatural dread of our interference in his internal affairs, and the difficulties of his position as described in our Despatch¹ of the 7th of June last, combined, perhaps, with the conviction that, if ever a struggle for the independence of Afghanistan should come, we must in our own interest help him, may have induced him to assume a colder attitude towards us than we should desire. But we have no reason to believe that he has any desire to prefer the friendship of other Powers. We are convinced that a patient adherence to the policy adopted towards Afghanistan by Lord Canning, Lord Lawrence, and Lord Mayo, which it has been our earnest endeavour to maintain, presents the greatest promise of the eventual establishment of our relations with the Amir on a satisfactory footing; and we deprecate, as involving

¹ Paragraphs 24 to 26 and 33 to 36.

serious danger to the peace of Afghanistan and to the interests of the British Empire in India, the execution, under present circumstances, of the instructions conveyed in your Lordship's Despatch."¹

The signing of this dignified and earnest remonstrance was the last service rendered by Lord Northbrook to the joint interests of India and Afghanistan. Weighty in itself, it possesses a special interest as showing how much his treatment of the Afghan Question had gained in sympathy, fairness and farsightedness since the day when he, too, had proposed to send a British Envoy to Kabul. The reluctance displayed by Shere Ali to accede to this proposal, and his subsequent sacrifice of money which he sorely needed, rather than incur the faintest suspicion of having allowed himself to be bribed to look favourably on the British desire to place European Officers in his frontier towns, had opened Lord Northbrook's eyes to the fact that the step which had seemed so simple to him, was really fraught with danger to the prince whose interests he honestly wished to serve; and he had not only desisted from pressing his request, but had returned to the policy of his predecessors, without allowing a tinge of personal disappointment to embitter the relations existing between India and Afghanistan. Well would it have been for both countries if he had succeeded in his endeavour to impress upon the Home Government the lessons of patience, moderation and generous appreciation of another's

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pp. 147—149.

² Signed by Lord Northbrook, H. W. Norman, A. Hobhouse, W. Muir, E. C. Bayley, A. J. Arbuthnot and A. Clarke.

difficulties, which he himself had learnt so thoroughly; but this satisfaction was not to be his. The same mail that carried the Despatch of the 28th of January to England, conveyed also Lord Northbrook's resignation of his office, and, on the 28th of the following month, Lord Salisbury addressed a Letter of Instructions to the new Viceroy, Lord Lytton, that ran counter, in every particular, to the earnest advice and solemn warnings which he had just received.

This letter dealt with the relations of Great Britain both with Afghanistan and Khelat, which, in each case, were described as unsatisfactory; but as that part of it relating to Afghan affairs has alone been published, we can only guess at the nature of Lord Salisbury's Instructions with regard to Khelat from subsequent events; that they were important and explicit, however, is proved by the fact that, before reaching Calcutta, Lord Lytton took the unprecedented step of interfering by telegraph with arrangements into which Lord Northbrook was entering with that state.

The Instructions as regarded Afghanistan amounted to this—that Lord Lytton was to lose no time in sending an Envoy to that country charged with the task of overcoming the Amir's "apparent reluctance" to the establishment of permanent British Agencies within his dominions. This time, Lord Salisbury did not leave to his Viceroy the duty of finding, or creating, an excuse for the despatch of this mission. The notification of "the Queen's assumption of the Imperial title in relation to her Majesty's Indian subjects, feudatories and allies," and of Lord Lytton's "assumption of the Viceregal office" were "the objects of smaller political interest" towards which it was to be ostensibly directed.

If the consequences of his infatuation had not been so fatal, one would be tempted to smile over the gravity with which, strong in his belief that the Amir's reluctance was only "apparent," Lord Salisbury weighed the important question of whether the British Envoy should travel *viâ* the Bolan Pass to Kabul and return by the Khyber, or *vice versa*, and the condescension with which, in the end, he left the decision of the route to the Amir.

That Shere Ali might decline to allow the British Envoy to travel by either, was an alternative to which he resolutely shut his eyes; but to another possible danger they had been opened by Lord Northbrook's pertinent hint—that the price to be paid to the Amir, in exchange for the surrender of his right to exclude all Europeans from his kingdom, would have to be a high one. The Amir when invited to show his confidence in the British Government by frankly uttering his hopes, might put forward quite inadmissible demands:—How was this difficulty to be met?

Lord Salisbury had a simple solution ready. Lord Lytton was to divide those demands into such as he had no intention of conceding, and into others which, under certain conditions, he might be willing to entertain, and to instruct his Agent to prevent the former demands becoming subjects of discussion, whilst the latter he was to refer to the Indian Government with such favourable assurances as might induce the Amir to recognize the advantage of facilitating, by compliance with the Viceroy's wishes, the fulfilment of his own.

We are not told what were the requests to which all expression was to be denied, but those which "under certain conditions" Shere Ali was to be permitted to formulate were :

1st. A fixed and augmented subsidy.

2nd. A more decided recognition than had yet been accorded by the Government of India to the order of succession established by him in favour of his younger son, Abdullah Jan.

3rd. An explicit pledge by treaty, or otherwise, of material support in case of foreign aggression.

The question of the subsidy appeared to Lord Salisbury of such minor importance that, with the contemptuous hint that Lord Lytton would "probably deem it inexpedient to commit his Government to any permanent pecuniary obligation on behalf of a neighbour whose conduct and character had hitherto proved uncertain," he left it to the Viceroy's decision.

As regarded the recognition of Abdullah Jan, Lord Salisbury was quick to see that Lord Mayo's vague promise—"to endeavour, from time to time, as circumstances may allow, to strengthen the Government of your Highness and to enable you . . . to transmit to your descendants all the dignities and honours of which you are the lawful possessor"—could have given little satisfaction to its recipient; but the most acute mind would be puzzled to detect the difference in degree of "ambiguity" between the hopes which this "ambiguous" language was intended to encourage, and those that were to be fed "by a frank recognition of a *de facto* order in the succession established by a *de facto* Government to the throne of a foreign State," which recognition was not "to imply, or necessitate, any intervention in the internal affairs of that State;" and the difficulty is made all the greater by the fact that Lord Salisbury was clearly as little inclined as Lord Mayo had been, to supply the Amir with

funds to enable him to do for himself what the British Government's respect for the independence of Afghanistan forbade it to do for him.

Nor was Lord Salisbury less alive to the "ambiguous" nature of the terms in which Lord Northbrook had couched his promises of assistance to the Amir in case of aggression on his territories, for to them he attributed the "ambiguity and reserve" by which "Shere Ali's attitude towards the Government of India had (has) ever since been characterized;" but as the Disraeli administration had no intention of taking upon itself greater responsibilities than those which Mr. Gladstone's Ministry had been ready to incur, the Secretary of State for India had no more definite instructions to give Lord Lytton on this head than that he should try to answer the demand, were it renewed, in different words to those employed by Lord Northbrook, words which might "secure to their unaltered policy the advantages of which it had (has) been hitherto deprived by an apparent doubt of its sincerity."

Now Shere Ali was too astute a prince to be satisfied by any change in the *form* of a declaration, so long as its *substance* remained the same; and, therefore, so far as his "attitude of ambiguity and reserve" sprang from vexation at having been denied an unconditional assurance of support against Russian aggression, no juggling with words, however skilful, would avail to alter it. But, as has been conclusively shown, Shere Ali's discontent, which was not of a nature to alarm the Indian statesmen who knew him best, since it had never displayed itself in any act running counter to the obligations which he had accepted towards the British Go-

vernment, was due to several causes, amongst which, not the one insisted on by Lord Salisbury, but the Seistan Award and the proposal to send a British Envoy to Kabul that preceded the Simla negotiations, and the suggestion to depute British Military Officers to examine his frontiers that marked their close, were the chief. No reversal of the Seistan Award was possible; and now this new attempt to secure more cordial relations with him was to be ushered in by a repetition of the demand which had already done something to sap the foundations of the old friendship; the same demand in a far more odious form, since it was to be imposed upon the Amir as a test of his loyalty to the British alliance, and to be supported by threats.

“If the language and demeanour of the Amir be such as to promise no satisfactory result of the negotiations thus opened, his Highness should be distinctly reminded that he is isolating himself, at his own peril, from the friendship and protection it is his interest to seek and deserve.”—So runs the eleventh paragraph of Lord Salisbury’s Letter of Instructions to the new Viceroy, a paragraph in which the germs of an Afghan war lay hidden; for how could negotiations promise a satisfactory result when they were to begin in a disregard of the Amir’s most cherished right; to be carried on with duplicity;¹ and to end in imposing upon

¹ It was duplicity to pretend to be giving the Amir something which had never yet been within his reach, when the most anxious care was to be taken not to commit the British Government to anything more definite than what Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook had offered him.

him a number of entirely new obligations. "Her Majesty's Government must have for their own agents undisputed access to its (Afghanistan's) frontier positions."—"They must have adequate means of confidentially conferring with the Amir upon all matters as to which the proposed declaration would recognize a community of interests."—"They must be entitled to expect becoming attention to their friendly counsels."—"The Amir must be made to understand that, subject to all fair allowance for the condition of the country and the character of the population, territories, ultimately dependent upon British power for their defence, must not be closed to those of the Queen's officers, or subjects, who may be duly authorized to enter them by the British Government." Such were the conditions to which Shere Ali was to be called upon to submit—and what was he to receive in exchange? A subsidy, if Lord Lytton should deem it expedient to give him one; the advantage of the advice of British officers in the improvement of his military organization; and a re-embodiment, in an improved form of words, of Lord Northbrook's conditional promise of aid against unprovoked attack by any foreign power.

And if negotiations conducted on such a basis were to result in "the irretrievable alienation of Shere Ali's confidence in the sincerity and power of the Indian Government"—sincerity towards himself, power as against Russia—why then, "no time must be lost in re-considering, from a new point of view, the policy to be pursued in reference to Afghanistan."

It is hardly necessary to say that Lord Salisbury did not establish any connection between the new policy which he

was instructing Lord Lytton to inaugurate and that "irretrievable alienation" of Shere Ali's confidence which he foresaw as possible; on the contrary, he attributed his prevision of that contingency to his acquaintance with Shere Ali's past conduct which had "more than once been characterized by a significant disregard of the wishes and interests of the Indian Government"—conduct to the loyalty of which Lord Mayo had borne generous testimony, and which Lord Northbrook had so recently vindicated against this very aspersion.

This Letter of Instructions and the Despatches exchanged between Lord Salisbury and Lord Northbrook have been thus minutely analysed, because succeeding despatches, containing the history of subsequent events, are so full of mis-statements as to the causes in which those events had their roots, that it would be vain to attempt to make them clear to readers who did not enter on their consideration with a full and accurate knowledge of the state of the Afghan question, at the time when Lord Northbrook yielded the Vice-royalty of India to Lord Lytton.

CHAPTER IV

INAUGURATION OF THE NEW POLICY.

ON the 5th of April, 1876, Lord Lytton arrived in Calcutta, and on the 5th of May Sir Richard Pollock, Commissioner of Peshawar, addressed a letter to Shere Ali informing him of the new Viceroy's intention to depute his friend, Sir Lewis Pelly, to Kabul for the purpose of notifying to his Highness his—Lord Lytton's—accession to office, and “the addition which it had pleased her Majesty the Queen to make to her Sovereign Titles, in respect to her Empire of India.”¹

The Commissioner of Peshawar was the accepted channel of communication between the Indian and the Afghan Governments, and a subordinate must write in conformity with the instructions of his superior; but it is impossible to help pitying Pollock for the necessity that compelled him to impart information which he knew would be so unwelcome to its recipient, and to appear to approve of a step against which he had so recently protested.

This letter was debated in the Afghan Durbar for several days, and those discussions revealed that the old objections to the reception of a European Mission were as strong and

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 174.

lively as ever in the minds of the Amir's advisers. All the former arguments against such a step were revived—the danger to the “Sahibs” themselves from Afghan fanaticism; the danger to Afghanistan should they be injured, or insulted; the danger to the good understanding between the two countries were the Envoy to ask what the Amir could not concede; the danger that, if the Afghan Government admitted a British Envoy, it might be required to receive a Russian Envoy also.

None of these arguments appear, however, in the letter, at once courteous and ironical, in which, on the 22nd of May, the Amir replied to the Commissioner. His Highness had heard with joy “the glad tidings of the assumption of the *Shah-i-Shah* by Her Majesty the Queen,” and of “the arrival of his noble Excellency Lord Lytton,” and “expected that the friendship and union of the two exalted Governments, more than in former times, would (will) be fixed and secured.” As regarded “political parleys”—those that had been held at Simla were “sufficient and efficient,” and there was no need for further discussion of subjects that had then been settled; but if the English Government entertained any thought “of refreshing and benefiting the God-given State of Afghanistan,” let them hint it, and he would send a confidential Agent to learn “the things concealed in the generous heart of the English Government,” and to reveal them to him—the Amir—that he might “carefully weigh them and commit his answer to paper.”¹

In a long despatch written on the 10th of May, 1877,

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 174.

Lord Lytton speaks of the "studied ambiguity" of the response. In reality its meaning was clear enough to the Viceroy, who did not relish the rebuff which it dealt to his over-confident policy, nor its politely veiled insight into his ulterior schemes.

In July the Commissioner of Peshawar's pen was again called into requisition to express the Viceroy's regret at the reluctance evinced by the Amir to the reception of a friendly Mission, and his belief that that reluctance was due to a misconception of his Excellency's objects. Sir R. Pollock was further instructed to warn his Highness that by hastily rejecting the hand of friendship now held out to him, he would render nugatory the friendly intentions of the Viceroy and oblige him to regard Afghanistan as a State, which had voluntarily isolated itself from the alliance and support of the British Government.

To Atta Mahomed, Pollock wrote the Viceroy's mind in still stronger terms. The reasons urged in the Durbar against the coming of the Mission were dismissed with impatient contempt. His Excellency could not suppose that the objection, on the score of the Amir's inability to protect it, was serious. The notion that the Envoy might put forward demands incompatible with the interests of the Amir must "have been derived from idle reports, or mischievous misrepresentations, by which his Highness would always be liable to be led into grievous error as to the intentions of the British Government, so long as he declined to avail himself of the opportunities afforded him for entering into frank and open communications with it." As regarded the surprising statement that the Amir would be obliged to receive Russian

Envoys if he accepted the British Mission, the Viceroy, "as the responsible Representative of the Queen of England and Empress of India," could not "consider this excuse a valid one." Was not the Amir aware that the British Government, acting on behalf of his wishes and interests, had obtained from the Government of the Czar written pledges not to interfere, directly, or indirectly, in the affairs of Afghanistan?

His Excellency was willing to believe that, "in declining to receive the Envoy of the British Government, the Amir might not have fully weighed" all the responsibility that he would incur, if he deliberately rejected the opportunity afforded him of making known his views in regard to the interests of Afghanistan, nor the impossibility of the British Government's maintaining a community of interest between the two states, and protecting the independence and integrity of Afghanistan under conditions incompatible with the ordinary intercourse of friendly Courts; and, believing this, he was still ready to authorize Sir Lewis Pelly to wait upon the Amir at such place as he might appoint. But the Amir's alternative proposal to depute an Agent to ascertain what the Vakil had designated as "the objects sought by the British Government," Lord Lytton declined to entertain "as derogatory to the dignity of that Government"; and the Native Agent was to warn Shere Ali that, if he continued to refuse "to receive the Viceroy's Envoy, the responsibility for the result would rest entirely on the Government of Afghanistan."¹

Not content with bringing pressure to bear on the Amir

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pages 176—177.

and his ministers through the ordinary official channel, the Viceroy authorized Dr. Bellew and other of their personal friends to address to them letters "explaining the sentiments" of the Indian Government, and "the importance of the opportunity then offered to the Afghan Government for materially strengthening its position at home and abroad."¹

If Shere Ali had not previously weighed all the considerations set forth in Pollock's letter to Atta Mahomed, he certainly must have found food for painful thought after he had been made acquainted with its contents. The contemptuous treatment accorded to a reason which he had urged successfully upon preceding Viceroys, was no light blow; but the turning of his Minister's second plea for rejecting the mission into an argument for compelling him to receive it, was a still harder one. How was he to believe that the fear lest the Envoy should put forward inadmissible demands was groundless, when the visit of that Envoy was, itself, a thing which the British Government had no right to ask him to accept, and which it would not be safe for him to agree to? And what comfort could he derive from the reminder that the Russians were pledged not to meddle in Afghan affairs, when he knew that this attempt to force a Mission upon him was due to no other cause than the British Government's want of confidence in Russia's promises? Shere Ali must have reflected, too, that if there was a difference between the Viceroy's sending an Envoy to Afghanistan, and his—the Amir's—sending one to India, that difference was in favour of the proceeding which violated no solemn under-

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 167.

taking, and which would have served Lord Lytton's purpose equally well, whether that purpose was confined, as had at first been stated, to the communication of two pieces of Court news, or embraced as had now been admitted—notwithstanding the sneer at the Vakil's allusion to "objects sought by the British Government"—a desire to afford him, the Amir, "an opportunity of making known his views."

And that invitation to make known his views had a sinister sound when backed up by threats of the consequences which would flow from neglecting it—all the more sinister because Shere Ali, from the day when his wishes had been refused at Ambala up to this spring of 1876, had never, on his own initiative, expressed a desire for any change in the relations in which he stood towards the British Government—relations which, however unsatisfactory they might be to his dynastic ambitions, at least respected his own and his country's independence.

Altogether a serious communication, this letter of Pollock's of the 8th of July, and the Amir may be pardoned for taking seven weeks to ponder over it before writing his answer, which was brief and quite free from "ambiguity." He had received and understood the Commissioner's letter to himself, and had arrived at a clear comprehension of the letter addressed by him to the agent. He had already stated his wish that his Envoy might be received by the Viceroy; as this was not acceptable to the British Government, he now proposed, either that an English representative should meet an Afghan representative on the frontier to explain, mutually, the views of their respective Governments, or that the British Agent in Kabul, who had long been intimately acquainted

with his wishes, should proceed to India to lay them before the Viceroy.

This latter proposal was accepted by the Indian Government, with the intimation that, if the Vakil were to come at all, he must come quickly, as the Viceroy was to start on the 10th of October on a tour through Kashmir and along the North-West Frontier of India.

Atta Mahomed reached Simla on the 6th of October, and, on the 7th, he had a conversation with Sir Lewis Pelly, to whom he stated that the Amir's wishes were identical with those which he had expressed, personally, to Lord Mayo in 1869, and had laid before Lord Northbrook, through Nur Mahomed, in 1873; and when questioned, named eight causes as having tended to estrange the Afghan from the British Government.

1. The decision of the Seistan Boundary Commission.

2. The recent proceedings of the Indian Government in Khelat—proceedings of which an account will shortly be given.

3. The intervention of Lord Northbrook in favour of Yakub Khan.

4. The transmission to the Mir of Wakhan of presents without the Amir's knowledge, or consent.

5. The personal annoyance of the Amir at the results of the Simla Conference, and the influence of Nur Mahomed, who had been embittered against the British by the scant courtesy shown to him by certain persons at Simla, and whilst acting on the Seistan Commission.

6. The Amir's displeasure at a reference made to his advisers in a recent letter from the Commissioner of Peshawar.

7. The Amir's distrust of the British Government's policy

towards himself, which he believed to have only British, and not Afghan, interests in view.

8. The Amir's conviction, dating from the Simla Conference, that whilst the British Government desired to depute Political Agents into Afghanistan and to induce him to guide his policy by their advice, it was unprepared to bind itself to any future course in regard to him.

Atta Mahomed explained the Amir's objection to the visit of a complimentary mission, by his Highness' impression that it could lead to no improvement in the mutual relations of the two states—a natural impression, considering the high-handed way in which Lord Lytton had set about trying to mend them; also by his conviction that the presence in Kabul of even a temporary mission might create excitement and be attended with personal risk to the Envoy—a foreboding fatally fulfilled after Shere Ali's death; by his fear lest the complimentary mission should merge into one of a permanent character—exactly what Lord Lytton intended it should do—and that an envoy once established in Kabul might become a referee for discontented Afghan subjects, or, in any case, cause annoyance to the patriotic party, and raise the hopes of the disaffected—an opinion which he supported by citing the experience of other Native States.

Nevertheless the agent assured Sir Lewis Pelly that the Amir did not suspect Great Britain of conspiring with Russia against him, nor of coveting any portion of his territory—a confidence altogether misplaced so far as Lord Lytton was concerned, as Atta Mahomed was very soon to discover—on the contrary he counted on Great Britain's defending him against Russia in her own interest. As to

Russian agents in Kabul, the Vakil "admitted" that one had recently quitted that city, and that two others, "men of no consequence," were still there.

Why, in the report of this conversation, the word *admitted* should have been used in this instance, implying, as it does, that the truth had been dragged out of the witness, it is hard to see, since Atta Mahomed had himself forwarded the letters brought by these agents, to the Indian Government, which had discovered in them no cause for alarm or offence, and could now affirm that all Russian agents were regarded by the Amir as sources of embarrassment.

Of the general situation in Afghanistan, Atta Mahomed gave an excellent account: tranquillity prevailed on all the frontiers, and the party of Yakub Khan had broken up, though that prince, whose character and abilities the Vakil thought the Indian Government had overrated, was still so far a source of danger that the Amir could not safely quit Kabul whilst his son remained there in confinement; on which account, and also because he thought it concerned his dignity not to leave his capital for the purpose of receiving a British Envoy, he had ignored the Viceroy's offer to allow him to name the place of meeting.

These were the views expressed by the agent in his official interview with Sir Lewis Pelly; but Captain Grey, who rode home with him and saw him again privately the following morning, reported that he had brought him to allow that the Amir's position was really precarious and that he would, probably, be glad to come to the Indian Government's terms, if he were once convinced of its meaning real business—a mistaken opinion, for certainly nothing in the sequel goes

to prove that Shere Ali ever, for a moment, regarded Lord Lytton's proposals with favour.

On the 10th of October Atta Mahomed was admitted to an audience with the Viceroy, who, after recapitulating the information furnished by the Agent to Sir Lewis Pelly with regard to the views and feelings of the Amir, went on to remark that it was all very full and interesting, but quite new. Why was it that the Kabul Diaries contained merely reports of events, without comment or explanations?

Atta Mahomed was not willing to grant that his Diaries were meagre and uninteresting, but if they appeared so to the Viceroy, his Excellency must bear in mind that he had received no encouragement, or instructions from the Government to furnish it with impressions and opinions as well as with facts,¹ and that it was not safe to put very confidential matter into his letters.

The Viceroy then desired the Agent to understand that thenceforth he would be expected to keep the Indian Government fully informed, not only of all that took place in Kabul, but also of his own impressions as to the causes and character of the events reported by him, and of the dispositions

¹ "We think that the Agent shows a right judgment in omitting to report every idle rumour that may come to his hearing" (Despatch of Government of India, June 1875.)

"It is probable that his (the Agent's) influence with the Amir depends, in a considerable measure, on his abstinence from criticism on the internal state of Afghanistan and on the persons trusted by the Amir. On the whole I consider this reticence favourable to British interests." (Lieutenant-Governor R. H. Davies, 25th of March, 1875)

and motives of the chief actors in Afghan affairs. He must do this fully, even at the risk of occasionally expressing mistaken views, and take his own precautions for the safety of his despatches as far as Peshawar.

Lord Lytton next dwelt on "the profound compassion" with which he regarded Shere Ali's position and state of mind since, buoyed up, as he was, with the false notion that the British Government, for the protection of its own interests, would be compelled to help him in the event of external attack, he was allowing himself to drift into danger, the gravity and imminence of which he very inadequately realised. It was true that, so long as he proved himself "our friendly and loyal ally, not our interests only, but our honour would oblige us to defend his territories and support his throne; but the moment we had cause to doubt his sincerity, or question the practical benefit of his alliance, our interests would be all the other way." "The British Government could only assist those who valued its assistance," and the aid which "the Amir seemed disinclined to seek, or desire," might "at any moment be very welcome to one, or other of his rivals." "Our only reason for maintaining the independence of Afghanistan was to provide for the security of our own frontier," and, if we ceased to regard that country "as a friendly and firmly allied State, what was there to prevent us from providing for that security by an understanding with Russia which might have the effect of wiping Afghanistan out of the map altogether?" "If the Amir did not desire to come to a speedy understanding with us, Russia did, and she desired it at his expense."

"As matters now stood, the British Government was able

to pour an overwhelming force into Afghanistan . . . before a single Russian soldier could reach Kabul." "If the Amir remained our friend, this military power could be spread round him as a ring of iron; if he became our enemy, it could break him as a reed." Our relations with Afghanistan must become better or worse. He—Lord Lytton—was prepared to do all in his power to make them better, but he could undertake no "responsibility for the protection of a frontier which he was unable to look after by means of his own officers." "In the unhappy ambiguity" which characterized the Amir's relations with the British Government, he might well shrink from receiving British Agents, since his people would think that they had been sent "to threaten, or bully him; to spy out the nakedness of the land, or to encourage the disaffection of his subjects." But how different the result, how advantageous to the Amir, if the advent of the British Agent were preceded by the publication of a document "frankly declaring to all the world that the British Government was the friend of his friends and the enemy of his enemies." With an empty treasury, a discontented people and a rebellious son, "the Amir's position was surrounded with difficulties" and yet this was the man who pretended "to hold the balance between England and Russia, independent of either," this "earthen pipkin between two iron pots."

British policy did not "permit of the alteration of definite treaty engagements," but the Amir hitherto had only had "verbal understandings with us," the letter given to him by Lord Mayo "not being in the nature of a treaty engagement;" now, however, he had "the opportunity of concluding arrangements which would make him the strongest

sovereign that ever sat on the throne of Kabul." The Indian Government was prepared to promise that, in the event of unprovoked aggression upon his dominions, assistance should be afforded him in men, money and arms; that meantime, if it were his wish, it would fortify Herat and other points on his frontier, and lend him officers to discipline his army; that it would grant him a yearly subsidy—its amount to be settled by the Plenipotentiaries—and recognize Abdullah Jan as his successor, whilst asking nothing of him in return, except that he should refrain from attacking or provoking his neighbours; hold no external communications without our knowledge, more especially with Russia; allow British Agents to reside at Herat and elsewhere on the frontier, and a mixed Commission of British and Afghan officers to demarcate his borders; make arrangements for free circulation of trade on the principal trade routes, and for the establishment of telegraph lines along them; open Afghanistan freely to all Englishmen, official or non-official—providing as far as practicable for their safety, although he would not be held absolutely responsible for isolated accidents—and either accept a British Resident in Kabul, or depute an Envoy to the Viceroy's Head-Quarters, and receive special Missions whenever required to do so.

If the Amir was prepared to treat on the basis thus laid down, the Viceroy was willing to send Sir Lewis Pelly to negotiate a treaty with Syud Nur Mahomed Shah at Peshawar, or elsewhere; but if the Amir was not prepared to accept that basis, it would be useless for him to depute his Agent to India, as no other could be admitted. In the former case, the Treaty might be drawn up by the Plenipo-

tentiaries and signed by the Viceroy and Shere Ali at Peshawar in November, or at Delhi, should the Amir accept his Excellency's invitation to the Imperial assemblage to be held there in January 1877.

At a second interview which took place three days later, the Viceroy, after recapitulating his demands, concessions and warnings, charged Atta Mahomed to bring the Amir to a sense of the real position of affairs and to induce him to be present at the Imperial assemblage; and then dismissed him with a letter for the Amir on the subject of the proposed negotiations, an *aide-mémoire* for his own guidance, and a watch and chain, and a present of Rs.10,000 as a mark of the Indian Government's appreciation of his past faithful service.

What strikes one first in reading the official record of these conversations between Lord Lytton and Atta Mahomed, is the rapid growth of the claims of the British Government upon the Amir. On the 22nd January, 1875, Lord Salisbury avowed no larger aim than the establishment of British agents in Herat and Kandahar; on the 10th of October, 1876, Lord Lytton demanded that Afghanistan should be freely opened to all Englishmen, official and unofficial, for whose safety the Amir was to provide, though he was not to be held absolutely responsible for isolated accidents. This condition attached to an offer of alliance which the Amir could only reject at his peril, struck a deadly blow at Afghan independence; for the Government that imposed it would, of course, claim to be its interpreter, and as the free circulation of Englishmen in Afghanistan was certain to result in many "isolated accidents," that Government would keep in its hands the power of picking a quarrel with its

prince and people, whenever it ceased to be to its interest to maintain the arrangement of which this clause formed a part.

But what impresses one, perhaps, even more strongly, is the proof that these conversations afford that Lord Lytton had not only adopted Lord Salisbury's views, but that he found pleasure in clothing them in the most frankly brutal form. What was this earthen pipkin that it should presume to dream of remaining independent of the two iron pots, between which it was privileged to be allowed to swim down the stream of time? What value need be attached to verbal understandings, or to the mere letters of Viceroys? Treaty engagements, signed and sealed, alone were binding; and treaty engagements we had none with Shere Ali, so of course we were free to make any frontier arrangements¹ that suited our interests without any regard for his, or to help to put one of his rivals in his place, if that rival were willing to buy our assistance at our price. And what was to prevent us from uniting with Russia to wipe Afghanistan out of the map altogether?

Nothing, apparently, so far as Lord Lytton was concerned, except lack of opportunity; but other statesmen, of longer memory and more sensitive honour, would have been withheld by the remembrance of thirty-four years of peace, of three years of unjust and disastrous war, and by the restraining force of constantly renewed promises, none the less sacred

¹ These arrangements, even then, were taking in Lord Lytton's mind the form of the annexation of the Pishin and Kuram Valleys

because not embodied in any formal document—promises made to a prince who had broken none of his engagements to us, and had given us no right to believe from his conduct in the past that he would be false to them in the future.

And if the passionate pursuit of the object which he had been sent to India to effect—the virtual subordination of Afghanistan to India—hardened Lord Lytton's heart and blunted his conscience, it exercised a no less deadening influence on his intellect and his imagination. He could neither draw the right conclusions from his own arguments, nor form to himself a true conception of the effect which his words and acts would have on the mind of the Amir. His only excuse for insisting upon the admission of British Officers to the Afghan frontier towns, was his fear of the ambitious designs and restless intrigues of Russia—intrigues and designs of which he had no evidence—yet, in his eagerness to prove the powerlessness of the Amir to stand against Great Britain should he alienate her favours by refusing this demand, he boasted that he could throw an overwhelming force into Afghanistan long before a single Russian soldier could reach Kabul. The boast was perfectly true, but the conclusion to be drawn from it was not that which he tried to impose on Shere Ali, but its exact opposite:—the superiority of our position being so incontestible, there could be no need for the indecent haste with which he sought to establish British Officers in Herat and Kandahar.

Again, he reproved the Amir for venturing to doubt the sincerity of Russia's promises of non-intervention in Afghan affairs, whilst he was doing his best to induce him to give up his only bulwark against British interference in them by

the bribe of our assistance when his doubts should prove well-founded; he reproached him for his distrust of his—Lord Lytton's—good intentions towards him in the same breath with which he repudiated the engagements contracted with him by former Viceroys; he invited his confidence whilst sapping the foundation on which it had hitherto been based, and claimed his friendship with his hand at his throat.

"Trust me, or I will betray you; love me, or I will break you in pieces"—these were the commands and threats with which Lord Lytton assailed Shere Ali, and he actually seems to have persuaded himself, at times, that they would not only clear up the "ambiguity" of the Amir's attitude, but win his lasting gratitude and devotion. *At times*—not always—glimmerings of a clearer perception of the workings of human nature occasionally visited him, and these found substantial expression in the measures taken to profit by that "further alienation of Shere Ali's confidence" which might result from the too persistent determination to bully him into submission—measures which will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

Four days after the dismissal of the Vakil, Lord Lytton furnished Sir Lewis Pelly with instructions by which to guide himself in the coming conference with Shere Ali's representative. The tone of these was one of studied moderation and courtesy, contrasting a little too sharply with the harshness of the Viceroy's language when frankly explaining himself to Atta Mahomed; but there was no change for the better in the substance of the demands which Pelly was to press upon Nur Mahomed, and the arguments by which he was bidden to support them were both false and cruel.

For instance, if there was one thing which allowed of no doubt, it was that the Amir abhorred and dreaded the thought of admitting British officers to any parts of his dominions—yet, by stringing together a few expressions which he had used, or been reported to have used, when struggling at Ambala to induce Lord Mayo to guarantee to him and to his heirs the kingdom which he had fought so hard to recover and on which his hold was still so insecure, Lord Lytton tried to make it appear that he had given his “anticipatory assent” to the demand now made upon him to receive them, and that he “desired” the condition on which not only the meeting of the conference, but the continuation of the old friendship had come to depend. On the strength of these baseless assumptions, the Viceroy boldly went on to declare that the matter of the British agents was one on which the two parties were already so perfectly agreed, that nothing remained for Sir Lewis Pelly to do but to come to a “friendly arrangement with Nur Mahomed as to the measures necessary to give effect to an accepted principle.” As a matter of fact, as will presently be seen, the negotiations never got beyond the discussion of this point on which such perfect agreement existed, and the Afghan Minister died fighting against “the accepted principle” to his last breath.

Again, we know what the Amir went to Ambala hoping to obtain; what, at Simla, Nur Mahomed asked in his name; and we know, too, what Lord Salisbury had authorized Lord Lytton to give—a dynastic guarantee which, like the “ambiguous formula” of Lord Mayo, was to bind us to no interference on behalf of Shere Ali, or his heir, and a promise

of assistance against foreign aggression, differing, in form only, from the conditional pledge which Lord Northbrook had offered him and which, according to Lord Salisbury, he had rejected as a mockery. This decision may have been good policy; but there was in it nothing new; nothing more favourable to the Amir than in that pursued towards him by former Viceroy; nothing that can acquit Lord Lytton of wilful misrepresentation when he described himself as prepared to contract with Shere Ali a definite and practical alliance on the terms desired by his Highness in 1869 and 1873. And, above all, it was cruelly unfair of Lord Lytton, knowing as he did that he was *not* prepared to give to Shere Ali more than the shadow of the things on which his heart had been set; those things in exchange for which, so he had once declared, there was nothing he would not do to evince his gratitude—to hint that if the Amir should hesitate now to comply with his—the Viceroy's—wishes, not only would all our engagements towards him and his descendants be vitiated by that reluctance, but that, out of his own mouth, he would stand condemned.

The instructions were accompanied by an *Aide Mémoire* for Treaty, and an *Aide Mémoire* for subsidiary Secret and Explanatory Agreement, which reproduced in more exact form the conditions and concessions with which we are already acquainted.

CHAPTER V

GENESIS AND GROWTH OF THE FORWARD POLICY.

IN the year 1856, on the eve of that Persian War which was the immediate cause of the second treaty negotiated by Sir John Lawrence with Dost Mahomed, Brigadier-General John Jacob, C.B., the able and successful Administrator of the Sind Frontier, addressed a private letter to the then Governor-General, Lord Canning, enclosing a Memorandum in which he explained his views on the political situation of the day and on the best measures to be adopted to assure, for all time, the absolute security of India's North-West Frontier.

Looking far into the future, he beheld Herat converted into an English fortress and garrisoned by 20,000 British and Native troops; but, for the moment, he was content to rest that absolute security on the occupation of Quetta, a small town and mud fort in Khelat territory, lying twenty-four miles beyond the Bolan Pass and 202 miles from Jacobabad. Here he desired to locate a Field Force, to consist of the Sind Irregular Horse, with two thousand irregular cavalry; two regiments of Native Infantry with one thousand Irregular Beluch Infantry; two troops of Horse Artillery and two Field Batteries—the latter to be specially raised for the purpose. This step would, he believed, place us in possession of a position “which would preclude all possibility

of successful invasion; which would give us by moral influence a full control over Afghanistan; establish the most friendly relations with us throughout the country; and ere long bring down a full stream of valuable commerce from all Central Asia to the sea."

Time has falsified these predictions. Quetta has long since been deposed from its proud position of sole and adequate protector and guardian of the North-West Frontier; British relations with Afghanistan have suffered, instead of gaining, by the creation of that standing menace to the independence of the latter state—a great fortress on its border; and the trade of central Asia, hampered by high tariffs, the outcome of Russian and Afghan jealousy and suspicion, has dwindled steadily year by year.

Jacob's plans and arguments made so considerable an impression on Lord Canning's mind, that he might have forestalled Lord Lytton in the occupation of Quetta but for the strenuous opposition of his Military Secretary, that Henry Durand who, as a young Engineer officer, had blown in the gates of Ghazni, and who had brought back with him, out of the perils and humiliations of the first British invasion of Afghanistan, a clear comprehension of the enormous difficulties which must beset any force operating in and through that country, and who was able to convince the Governor-General that an occupation of Quetta, undertaken as a demonstration against Persia must end in an advance upon Kandahar, or even upon Herat.

Durand's representations carried the day: instead of demonstrating at Quetta, we demonstrated at Bushire, and the event belied Jacob's prediction that a descent on the

coast of Persia would not greatly alarm her Government, and that an attempt on our part to penetrate into the heart of that country, would be met by a rapid advance on our unprotected North-West Frontier, and the establishment of a Persian army in firm and secure possession of Kandahar. Persia was easily coerced, and within a few weeks of her submission, Lord Canning had cause to thank Heaven that he had not embarked upon a distant adventure by land, for India was in the throes of the great Mutiny, and John Lawrence was hesitating whether, or not, to abandon Peshawar and retire behind the Indus. Great as were the difficulties with which the British in India had to cope in 1857, they would have been far greater had Baluchistan risen against us, as it undoubtedly would have done, if Jacob and his faithful Irregular Hindustani Troops had been at Quetta, hundreds of miles away, at a season of the year when return would have been impossible.

There was never a time when John Lawrence was not opposed to the policy of advancing our frontiers; never a time when he had faith in Jacob's dream of conciliating the Afghans by dangling before their eyes the benefits which their Baluchi neighbours were reaping from our presence among them, and of gaining their confidence by placing ourselves in a position from which it would be comparatively easy to menace their independence.¹ He always shared

¹ "The enjoyment of regular pay by the Khelat people would have great influence on the Afghans generally. . . . If all distrust of us be removed from the Afghan mind, as it has been removed from the minds of the government and people of

the opinion of an eminent soldier of the present day, that "the less the Afghans see of us, the less they will dislike us;"¹ and though it was he who signed both the first and second treaties with Dost Mahomed, he never doubted that the Indian Government would have acted more wisely in abstaining from all political relations with Afghanistan. But the grave danger which he and India had escaped in 1857, confirmed him in those views and gave additional force to the condemnation which, nine years after the rejection of General Jacob's proposals, he pronounced upon a similar scheme emanating from Sir Henry Green, Jacob's successor in Sind, and endorsed by Sir Bartle Frere, then Governor of Bombay.²

More cautious than Jacob, Green did not advise a sudden and immediate advance to Quetta, but merely the adoption of measures in Baluchistan and the Bolan which should lead us thither almost imperceptibly, and he justified his anxiety to see that place in British hands by the argument, that the screen of mountains separating India from Afghanistan shut us off from all timely knowledge of events occurring in Central Asia, and that it was essential to our safety that we should go beyond it. Like Jacob, Green prophesied evil things if his advice was not accepted and acted on.

But Lawrence had heard both the arguments and the

Khelat, the whole country would aid us heart and hand."—Letter from General John Jacobs.

¹ Lord Roberts.

² Papers relating to Central Asia and Quetta.

prophecies before, and he was unconvinced by the one and indifferent to the other. In the Minute in which he examined Green's proposals, he stated that he had fully considered Jacob's reasonings at the time of their original publication, had not lost sight of them in the interval, and adhered to the decision deliberately arrived at in Council that an advance to Quetta was not advisable, though, if at any future time a real danger to the Indian Empire were imminent, it would always be open to the British Government to take that step. He further denied that by such an advance the Indian Government would obtain better, or quicker, information as to Central Asian affairs, than already reached it through St. Petersburg and Peshawar. He repudiated with calm contempt the insinuation that the Government of India was in the habit of shutting its eyes to all that was taking place beyond our border, and claimed for himself and his Council a perfect acquaintance with the effects which Russia's movements in Central Asia were having upon the minds of the peoples living beyond our frontier, and with the fact that the neighbouring States had long been discussing on which side—British, or Russian—they should range themselves; and he gave as his reasons for dissenting from the course which Sir H. Green would have had him adopt in view of the said effects and discussions, his belief that, "if the course of events should ever bring us to a struggle with the Northern Power on our Indian frontier, the winning side would be the one which refrained from entangling itself in the barren mountains which now separate the two Empires, and that the Afghans themselves, foreseeing this result, were

likely, in the end, to throw their weight on the ~~same~~ side.”¹

If the Statesman spoke in this Minute, an exhaustive military judgment was passed upon the policy of Jacob and Green by the Commander-in-Chief in India, Sir William Mansfield, afterwards Lord Sandhurst. Prefacing his remarks with two extracts from Sir Henry Havelock’s “War in Afghanistan,” descriptive of the country between Sukkur and Dadar, Sir William Mansfield pointed out that if we assumed the troops then at Jacobabad to be thrown forward to Quetta, we should have the spectacle of a force separated, by such ground as that described by Havelock, from the nearest point on the Indus by a distance of 257 miles—equivalent in time to twenty days’ march without a halt on the part of the advancing force; incapable of being reinforced or provisioned during the hot season; and in danger, should it be seriously threatened in front, of having the Bolan Pass closed in rear by the predatory tribes whose habits, it was safe to assume, did not differ from those of the generation which gave so much annoyance to Lord Keane. In his—Sir William Mansfield’s—opinion, if we were to accede to a military occupation of Quetta, the most ordinary prudence would compel us to double the estimate of troops submitted to Lord Canning by General Jacobs, and to include in it at least 3,000 British infantry and artillery and a regiment of dragoons, for after the bitter experience of the Mutny, no Government would ever dream of holding a distant outpost with Native soldiers only. Such an occupation would be

¹ Papers relating to Central Asia and Quetta, pp. 13—15.

a very costly affair, and, considering the defences afforded on our side of the Bolan Pass by the difficulties of the ground, he thought it very questionable whether the outlay would be worth while, even if the Russians were at Kandahar and Kabul, so long as there was peace between Great Britain and Russia; and that if the worst prognostications of the Russophobists were fulfilled, he should still be inclined to say that the side whence to defend the Bolan was not the *western*, but rather the *eastern* extremity, because *there* a hostile force could be struck on the head before it could have time to deploy with its heavy material, without which a modern army could not move against such forces as we should array against it, on any field we might choose between Shikarpur and Dadar. The desert would thus be turned into our most useful ally, instead of being a formidable difficulty, as would be the case if Jacob's plan were adopted.

Once at Quetta, however, we could not stop there, but must be drawn on and on, till ultimately we should find ourselves occupying the whole of Afghanistan, and this he supposed to have been General Jacob's real intention. The Commander-in-Chief did not affirm that it was Sir H. Green's also, but he asked whether that officer had ever weighed the consequences of the movement proposed, and the certainty that those consequences would present themselves at once to the Afghan mind, and the minds of Persia, Bokhara and Russia. That we should be able to creep over the country between Jacobabad and Quetta so insidiously that neither India nor her neighbours should be aware of our proceedings until the whole of our scheme of advance had been accomplished,

he deemed impossible; and he branded the suggestion as dishonouring to British Policy.¹

No more was heard for some years of the vital importance of Quetta to India; but eight months after the rejection of Sir H. Green's proposals, the policy of defending India by pushing forward into Afghanistan raised its head once more, in a Note written by Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Lumsden, Deputy Quarter-Master-General, at the Viceroy's request. Lumsden, a great traveller and linguist, well acquainted with the countries and peoples lying to the north and west of India, agreed with Jacob that the Bolan was the only route by which a Russian army was ever likely to advance against us; yet he strongly condemned the idea of attempting to forestall our great rival in the occupation of Herat, and scoffed at the "disciples of the Jacobean principle," who had "no scruple about locating an outpost 250 miles in advance of its nearest support, with the Bolan Pass and a desert" between that support and it. In his opinion, "to advance beyond the mountains forming our present strong frontier, and to make the difficult accessory zones in advance the principal field of operations was to commit the mistake for which Jomini condemned the French Directory, when, with fatal result, they invaded Switzerland." And yet the man who saw so clearly the folly of believing that our "certain and even rule" would be acceptable to the "restless Afghan" for longer than the life-time of the generation which, from personal experience of both, could contrast it with "the anarchy and oppression" which preceded it—this

¹ Papers relating to Central Asia and Quetta, pp. 16—19.

very man wanted the Indian Government to possess itself of the strategical key to Afghanistan, by taking over from the Amir the valleys of Kuram and Khost. With the Peiwar and Shutargardan Passes in our hands, so Lumsden argued, we should master Kabul, and our presence there, in alliance with its government, would give to that government immense moral and physical strength. As Jacob had counted on soon reconciling the Afghans to our presence, in a position which threatened Kandahar, by subsidies of money and arms; so Lumsden thought to induce the Amir to welcome our taking up a position, whence we could dominate his capital, by relieving him of the trouble of collecting his own revenues in one portion of his dominions, and by promises of support against internal, or external foes. Each of these officers was equally convinced that his particular scheme would be a cheap, effectual and final solution of the North-West Frontier Question, and, it is hard to say, which of them presented his proposals in the more moral and philanthropic light. Jacob's assurance that, in the arrangements proposed by him, "we should act in no respect other than as we might be prepared to justify before all good men in the world, or before the throne of God," being matched by Lumsden's anxiety to make amends to Afghanistan for having been "unjustly invaded by us in her prosperity, by not shrinking from strengthening her in her adversity; by securing for her oppressed subjects the benefits of a strong administration; by acting faithfully in all our dealings; and in showing, by example, that our Christian precepts were something more than the selfish hankerings of mercantile adventurers."¹

¹ Ibid., pp. 27—37.

But Lumsden had to deal with the same man who had been proof against the plausible reasonings of Jacob and Green, and his note simply gave Sir John Lawrence the opportunity of re-asserting his fixed determination to take no steps which could alarm the susceptible jealousy of the Afghans, or violate the spirit, if not the letter, of our existing agreements with them; "for whether we advance into Afghanistan as friends or foes, would, in the end, make little difference—the final result would be the same." The Viceroy could not be brought to see the distinctions, moral and political, which the advocates of the Forward Policy drew between their own aims and methods, and those of the authors of the Afghan War; the policy was one and the same, and there could be no escaping the evils that flowed from it; neither could he be shaken in his conviction that any advance, whether towards Kandahar or Kabul, would be construed by the Afghans into the forerunner of the occupation of their country, which, indeed, it must prove, since Quetta and Kuram were only valuable in the eyes of those desiring their occupation, as stepping-stones to Herat and Kabul, in the event of a Russian advance.¹ He did not

¹ In writing to the *Times*, on the 30th October, 1878, Lord Lawrence re-affirmed this opinion:—"In 1854, when the occupation of Quetta was advocated, it was done so openly, on the ground of its being a first step in advance to the occupation of Kandahar and Herat; or, in other words, the invasion of Afghanistan; and this view has been reiterated, from time to time, in the press and in documents of an official character which have been made public. Hence the grounds of offence and apprehension to Afghans."

deny that those cities were important strategical positions; but they could not be occupied in the strength that would be necessary, except at an enormous cost of men and money. The soothing doctrine that we could occupy large territories beyond our frontier, inhabited by restless and warlike tribes, with the force which barely sufficed to hold India securely, found no acceptance with him; on the contrary, he thought that all, or nearly all, the troops so employed, would have to be added to the then existing army, and that the constitution of this new force, so far as it was Native, must be "a serious matter," as Afghans in any number would be out of the question," "Gurkhas in excess of the five regiments on the Bengal establishment were not to be had," and "Hindustanis and Sikhs would not like such service."

And for us to advance to meet Russia was to give her so much vantage ground; for we should thereby lessen the distance she would have to march her armies, whilst increasing the interval between our own troops and their true base of operations. Let the Russians, if they had the means and the desire to attack India, which he doubted, undergo the long and tiresome marches which lie between the Oxus and the Indus; let them wend their way through difficult and poor country, inhabited by a fanatical and courageous population, where, in many places, every inch could be defended; then they would come to the conflict on which the fate of India would depend, toil-worn, with an exhausted infantry, a broken-down cavalry and a defective artillery, and our troops would have the option of meeting them, wherever the genius of our commanders might dictate.

As to the fear that to allow Russia to occupy the coun-

tries adjacent to our western border was to give her the opportunity of stirring up strife and hatred against us among the mountain tribes, Sir John Lawrence pointed out, that *her* risks would be greater than *ours*, since the wider the area over which she spread her rule, the greater the danger of insurrection which she herself would run, and the greater the likelihood that the tribes would seek our aid against her. The argument in favour of an advance on our side, drawn from the internal troubles which the extension of Russia's power to our frontier might provoke in India itself, he met with the remark that, whether those troubles occurred, or not, would depend largely on the Government of the day and the contentment of the people; that, at the worst, our troops massed along the border, ready to meet the invaders, would have a greater influence on that discontent, than the same troops locked up beyond the mountains of Afghanistan; and, that should a really formidable insurrection arise in India; the proper action of its rulers would be to recall the army beyond the Passes, the fate of which, when retiring, encumbered with women, children and camp-followers, might be most melancholy.

"Taking every view, then, of this great question," wrote Sir John Lawrence in conclusion, "the progress of Russia in Central Asia, the effect it will, in course of time, have on India, the arrangements we should have to make to meet it, I am firmly of opinion that our proper course is not to advance our troops beyond our present border; not to send English officers into the different States of Central Asia; but to put our own house in order, by giving the people of India the best Government in our power; by conciliating, as

far as practicable, all classes; and by consolidating our resources. I am greatly in favour of opening up lines of communication of every kind which, on full consideration, are likely to prove useful, so far as the means will permit; but I strongly deprecate additional taxation to any important extent, and I am greatly adverse to increasing our debt on unproductive works.”¹

After an interval of only nine months, the attention of the British Government was again called to Quetta by Sir Henry Rawlinson, who, in the memorandum of which mention was made in the first chapter of this history, recommended its occupation on the ground that the erection of a strong fortress at a point which would cover the frontier, and, in the event of an invasion, delay an enemy sufficiently to enable us to mass our full forces in the rear, would be likely to have a salutary effect upon the Native mind in India, which was said to be disturbed by our continued inactivity.

The proposal was, in this case, a thoroughly honest one, hiding no ulterior aims; yet its author, as we know, was quite alive to the fact that it might be misunderstood by the Afghans, and showed his sense of the importance to us of retaining their good-will by declaring that, “if the tribes in general regarded this erection of a fortress—above the passes, although not on Afghan soil—as a menace, or as a preliminary to a further hostile advance, then we should not be justified, for so small an object, in risking the rupture of our friendly intercourse.”

It is worthy of note that neither Jacob nor Green—

¹ Ibid., pp. 37—42.

both practical soldiers of great ability—advocated the erection of fortifications at Quetta. What they desired was the presence, above the Bolan Pass, of a small and highly mobile native force. Both had served under Sir Charles Napier who, when Commander-in-Chief in India, had branded as a fool the man who should desire to preserve and utilise the numerous forts scattered over the Punjab, and the former had himself pulled down those which he found his troops occupying in Sind.

Rawlinson with whom the idea of a fortified camp originated, though a soldier by profession, spent so large a portion of his life in the political service, that he could not be expected to share Napier's and Jacob's aversion to shutting up troops behind earth-works; but even he never dreamed of any thing more than a fort sufficiently strong to enable a small body of men to protect the upper end of the Bolan Pass long enough to give the Indian Government time to mass its forces at the lower end, and it was left to more recent times to witness the erection of the huge fortress which is the Quetta of to-day.

No effect was given to Sir Henry Rawlinson's recommendations; but the fourth attempt to commit the British Government to the policy of strengthening India by advancing her frontiers, met, as we already know, with a very different reception; and Lord Lytton arrived in Calcutta as much pledged to the occupation of Quetta as to the establishment of British Officers in Herat and Kandahar.

During Lord Northbrook's Vice-royalty, Baluchistan had been in a very disturbed state owing to the quarrels of the Khan and his chiefs, and, in the end, the Indian Government

had been obliged to intervene, in order to open the Bolan route which the civil dissensions had practically closed to trade. Its agent, Major Sandeman, an officer known and honoured all along the frontier, was well received by both sides, and soon brought about an apparent reconciliation between the Khan and his rebellious subjects; but no sooner had he withdrawn than fighting began again, and he had to return, taking with him a military escort of a thousand men. The occasion was favourable to the occupation of Quetta, but Lord Northbrook's Government, faithful to Lord Lawrence's policy, forbore to take advantage of it, and Sandeman was instructed to confine his action to the opening of the Bolan to the Kafilas waiting at Jacobabad and Shikarpur, and to a fresh endeavour to establish peace between the contending parties.¹ This time his success was real; the Kafilas, following a march behind the mission, reached the entrance to the Pass unmolested, and were permitted to traverse it on payment of the customary dues—which some of the Afghan merchants were much inclined to evade—and, after the matters in dispute between the Khan and the Sirdars had been submitted to a court of arbitration, terms of agreement were accepted by both parties and ratified on oath, in open Durbar.

By this arrangement tranquillity was restored to Baluchistan, and had Lord Northbrook been still in office, the mission would, probably, have been withdrawn as soon as time had tested the permanence of its work; but that Viceroy had quitted India a few days after Sandeman had started on his

¹ Baluchistan, No. 2, pages 140, 167, 168.

second journey to Khelat,¹ and withdrawal did not enter into Lord Lytton's views; on the contrary, his mind was set upon increasing the strength of the British force in Baluchistan, and so locating it that it should not only exercise a commanding influence in that state, but also menace Afghanistan. For a few months Sandeman was left to act freely on Lord Northbrook's instructions, then, in September, the Viceroy sent his private Secretary, Colonel G. P. Colley, to inquire into his doings, and either to revise them, if they should appear to be out of harmony with the Indian Government's new frontier policy, or to confirm them by concluding with the Khan of Khelat a secret treaty, the sixth article of which provided for the permanent occupation of that prince's territory by a British military force.

Colley's secret instructions also directed him to occupy Quetta, and to examine carefully the country in which the troops forming the British Agent's escort were to be stationed, as it was desirable to have "as soon as possible the opinion of a more experienced military man than Major Sandeman on the question of their distribution and safety."²

Colley arrived at Khelat on the 18th of October, where, after a grand Durbar, he obtained the Khan's signature to the treaty, and then proceeded to show himself "a more experienced military man" than Sandeman, by breaking up the little force, which the latter officer had hitherto kept

¹ It was to stop Sandeman's Mission that Lord Lytton sent to Lord Northbrook the telegram of which mention was made in a former chapter.

² Baluchistan, No. 2, page 360.

intact, into small bodies. At Khelat, as a guard for the British Agent, he left the mountain guns and a small detachment of infantry; to Dadar, at the south-eastern entrance of the Bolan, he sent all the cavalry; and at Quetta he placed a wing of infantry;—dispositions which so isolated the various detachments that they could be of no possible assistance to each other, and interposed a long and dangerous defile between one of them and the country from which it had to draw its supplies.¹ Some weeks later these dispositions were modified, but hardly improved; for, though the strength of the Quetta garrison was brought up to a regiment of infantry, a squadron of cavalry and a mountain battery, the addition did not render it self-sufficing; nor was there much gain to its communications from the nominal establishment of a small force at Mithri, two marches from Dadar, since, during the cold weather, it was to be scattered along the foot of the hills as a check on the raiding propensities of the Marri and Bugti tribes, and, during the hot weather, was to be withdrawn to Jacobabad, leaving only a few of its number behind to hold the hill posts.

The credit, or discredit, of these arrangements did not lie

¹ In the Government of India's despatch of the 23rd of March, 1877, Quetta is described as lying "in a district abounding in supplies," and Colley probably believed that the troops stationed there would be independent of India in the matter of food and forage. Such flattering descriptions are often to be met with in geographical accounts of these regions, but the abundance spoken of must be understood in relation to the needs of the Kafilas passing through them, not in relation to the requirements of a military force permanently located in the locality in question.

with the Commander-in-Chief, who exercised no control over the troops employed in their execution, and whose signature is wanting to the despatch in which the modifications just described were approved.¹

The occupation of Quetta, whatever its ultimate object, was, at the moment, only a move in the game which Lord Lytton was playing against Shere Ali; and it was quickly followed by other measures equally well devised to cow that prince into submission, or to drive him into open hostility.

A few pages back mention was made of the Memorandum in which Colonel Peter Lumsden advocated a British occupation of the Kuram and Khost Valleys, and of the uncompromising rejection of that proposal by Lord Lawrence. But schemes which made no impression upon the practical and

¹ In making these reckless dispositions Colley was probably led away by his overweening faith in the power of the breech-loader. In 1877 he wrote to General C. C. Ross: "the only point on which I feel I take a different view from you and most of the officers of Indian experience I meet, is as to the change produced by the breech-loader; this is, perhaps, natural. Until I came out here I had been living principally with officers fresh from the great breech-loading battles in Europe. I have many friends in both the German and the French armies, and the one thing that seemed to have impressed itself most on them was the utter impossibility of dislodging even the worst troops from any tolerable defensive position, if armed with breech-loaders and well supplied with ammunition, unless shaken previously by artillery." A few years later this mistaken confidence was to lead to a disaster to the British arms, and cost the writer of this letter his life.

just mind of the veteran Indian Statesman, had an irresistible charm for the ambitious and inexperienced Visionary who now filled his place. Lumsden, promoted to be Adjutant-General, and warmly supported by the Quarter-Master-General in India, Major-General Frederick Roberts, soon secured Lord Lytton's ear; and the dream of dominating Kabul from the summit of the Shutargardan and thence over-awing or dethroning Shere Ali, at his pleasure, took complete possession of the Viceroy's imagination. To prepare the way for its realization, he had the road between Rawal Pindi—the largest cantonment in Upper India—and Kohat—an important frontier-station commanding two roads into the Kuram Valley—repaired; the approaches to the Indus at Kushalgarh put into order, and a bridge of boats substituted for the ferry at that place; whilst to Thal, a village separated from Afghan territory by the Kuram River, he sent Cavagnari and other officers, with orders to select the site for a military camp and to obtain all possible information as to the country lying beyond that stream. He further established a bullock and mailcart service between Rawal Pindi and Kohat, and opened an alternative road suitable for the passage of guns, between the latter place and Attock on the Indus, *viâ* the Nilabgashah and Quarra jungles; he despatched a commissariat officer to form a large depôt at Kohat, and gave orders to collect at Rawal Pindi immense quantities of ammunition and ordnance stores, also a large number of transport animals; and finally, he directed the Commander-in-Chief to hold in readiness to move to Kohat, or its neighbourhood, three batteries of artillery—two of which were to be equipped

with mountain guns—two companies of sappers and miners, a regiment of British and two of Native cavalry, and two regiments of British and four of Native infantry.¹

But Lord Lytton did not stop short at measures to be taken within British territory. Determined to impress Shere Ali with the salutary truth that the British arm was long enough to reach him on his north-east as well as on his south-west frontier, he supplied the Maharajah of Kashmir, who sent a deputation to meet him at a place called Madhapur—the proposed visit to Kashmir had been abandoned—with arms of precision, and encouraged him to push forward troops into the passes leading to Chitral.²

From Madhapur, Lord Lytton proceeded to Peshawar, where he made the acquaintance of Cavagnari, Deputy Commissioner of that District, a man of rash and restless disposition and overbearing temper, consumed by the thirst for personal dis-

¹ The above items of information are taken from papers dealing with the blockade of the Afridi Tribes in 1876, which were presented to the House of Lords on the 28th February, 1881, and some of these measures were stated to have been adopted with a view to rendering that blockade more effective; but even of these it is hard to believe that they were not taken with the ulterior purpose of intimidating the Amir; whilst others can have been intended to serve no other end; notably the assembling of a large Field Force on the North-West Frontier, since in November 1876 the Viceroy prohibited the use of troops against the recalcitrant tribes, on the ground that the frontier police, if increased in numbers and armed with the Enfield rifle, should suffice to reduce them to submission, and the military operations known as the Jowaki War were not undertaken till a year later.

² The Afghan Question, page 213.

tion, and as incapable of recognizing and weighing the difficulties, physical and moral, which stood in the way of the attainment of his ends, as the Viceroy over whom he was thenceforward to exercise so pernicious an influence. From Peshawar he went on into Sind, where, on the 8th of December, he signed the treaty with the Khan of Khelat, in the presence of a large gathering of chiefs; and then continued his journey to Karachi and Bombay. The 1st of January, 1877, saw him in Delhi, the centre of the brilliant assemblage gathered together to do honour to their new Empress, an assemblage in which the Amir of Afghanistan was conspicuous by his absence.

This crowning achievement of his first cold-weather tour accomplished, the Viceroy returned to Calcutta to await the harvest of confidence and gratitude which he expected to spring up in Shere Ali's mind at the spectacle of a Government that had taken so much pains to prove to him its power "to break him as a reed," actually condescending to ask to be allowed to listen to his wishes and to relieve his anxiety of mind.

CHAPTER VI

THE PESHAWAR CONFERENCE.

ATTA Mahomed reached Kabul at the end of October, where he must at once have remitted the letter of which he was the bearer to the Amir, and have made him acquainted with the substance of the conversations he had held with the Viceroy, and the tone and temper of Lord Lytton's remarks; not till the 23rd of November, however, was he re-summoned to the palace to hear the proposed negotiations discussed by the Durbar. The debate was a long one; yet, in the end, the only decisive opinion at which the Prince and his ministers were able to arrive, was that the preliminary condition to the meeting of a conference laid down by Lord Lytton—that condition to which Shere Ali was credited with having given his “anticipatory assent”—was one to which they could not agree.

Throughout the month of December the discussions in the Durbar and the visits of the Vakil to the Amir were frequent. Atta Mahomed, urged on by the Viceroy, who had grown impatient at what he considered artful delays on the part of the Amir, and culpable supineness on the part of the Native Agent himself, putting great pressure both on Shere Ali and his advisers to compel them to yield to the demands of the Indian Government. On the 21st of December he was able at last to report that the Amir, “owing

to helplessness," had agreed to waive his objection to the residence of British officers on the border, but that he felt it incumbent on his Government to represent some important conditions (literally, difficulties,) with regard to that residence to the British Government, and such representations his Envoys, the Sadr-i-Azim,¹ Nur Mahomed Shah, and the Mir Akhor,¹ Ahmed Khan, would be empowered to make. The British Agent further informed his correspondent, the Commissioner at Peshawar, that he had heard privately that the Durbar authorities intended to propose attaching very stringent conditions to their consent to the admission of British officers into Afghanistan.²

The two Envoys, accompanied by Atta Mahomed, left

¹ Prime Minister; and Master of the Horse (literally, Lord of the Stables).

² 1st Should by any accident any injury occur to the life or property of any British officer in Afghanistan, steps should be taken (in such matters) according to the custom and law of Afghanistan, and the British Government should not put much pressure on the Afghan Government.

2nd The Duties of all British Officers on the border should be fully defined (literally, limited); they should not secretly, or openly, interfere with the internal civil and military affairs of Afghanistan.

3rd. Should a Russian Agent come to Afghanistan, contrary to the wishes of the British Government, to make representations regarding any object, the British Government should make their own arrangements to prevent his arrival, and give no trouble as to this prevention to the Afghan Government."

4th The language of this clause is very confused, but Sir A. Pollock interpreted it to mean that, if the British Government failed to give the Afghan Government sufficient aid in money and arms, the Afghan Government should be free to decline

Kabul on December 31st, 1876, and, travelling by short marches on account of the bad health of Nur Mahomed, arrived at Peshawar on the 27th of January, 1877. The following day Dr. Bellew visited the Sadr-i-Azim—the Mir Akhor's only part in the Conference seems to have consisted in falling asleep over its proceedings—sent by Sir Lewis Pelly to make complimentary inquiries, and to ascertain when it would suit the Afghan Envoy to begin the discussions.

Nur Mahomed received his old acquaintance in a friendly way—they had met at Kandahar in 1857, at Ambala in 1869 and in Seistan in 1872—but his mind was evidently preoccupied and for a time conversation flagged. At last, after Dr. Bellew had expressed the hope that everything in the house assigned to him was to his liking, he roused himself to reply that, so far as he himself was concerned, he was perfectly comfortable and happy, adding, after a brief pause, that his thoughts were dwelling on the business that had brought him to Peshawar; and when the Doctor replied that he hoped all would turn out well, he answered that both he and the Amir looked upon him—Bellew—as a friend, but that it was different as regarded the British Government. The Amir had come to have a deep-rooted distrust of its good faith and sincerity,—distrust for which he had many reasons. Bellew protested that the British Government was most favourably disposed towards the Amir, but the Envoy continued sceptical. The British Government's acts did not accord with its words. Why this press-

any assistance, whilst continuing, for friendship's sake, to permit the residence of the British Officers.

ing to send British Officers to Afghanistan, the reasons against which proceeding had been understood and accepted by Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook, if there was no wish to interfere in the internal affairs of that country? The Afghans were a small people, no match for the great British nation; but they were self-willed and independent, prizing their honour above life; and the Amir had lost his confidence in the British Government since Lord Northbrook meddled in the matter of his son Yakub Khan, and sent presents, without his consent, to the Governor of Wakhan. These acts had thrown the entire Durbar into alarm; and both the Amir and his people objected to the coming of British Officers, knowing that their advent would mean the loss of Afghan independence. Matters had now come to a crisis, and the situation was a most grave one. This was the last opportunity for settlement, and God only knew the future.¹

Dr. Bellew remarked, in reporting this conversation, that the Envoy spoke with great earnestness and gravity.²

On the 30th of January the Representatives of the Viceroy and the Amir met for the first time, and the incompatibility of the positions taken up by the respective Envoys became immediately apparent; Sir Lewis Pelly arguing on two assumptions, one of which Nur Mahomed absolutely denied,

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 195.

² Nur Mahomed had a personal cause for gravity; he had, as he told Bellew, just narrowly escaped death in consequence of Major Grey's having written him a letter reminding him of his having acquiesced, at Simla, in the coming of British Officers to Kabul.

whilst the discussion of the other he desired to defer till a later period of the negotiations. The first of these assumptions was that there existed between the Governments of Great Britain and Afghanistan "*nahamwari*"—misapprehensions—which it was essential to remove; the second, that, by sending an Envoy to India, the Amir had definitely committed himself to the principle of British Officers on his frontiers, a point on which Sir L. Pelly declared emphatically that he had no discretionary powers. The interview closed with a request on the part of Nur Mahomed that he might be made acquainted with the *nahamwari* of which Sir Lewis had spoken, with a view to preparing himself to discuss them.

At the second meeting, which took place on February 1st, Sir Lewis Pelly, professing to believe that Nur Mahomed's inquiry about the "misapprehensions" spoken of had reference only to the particular word by which the idea to be conveyed had been rendered in Persian, offered to substitute for it another expression—*fahmi na sawab*—which more exactly corresponded with the English term; but the Kabul Envoy put aside this quibble and stuck to his point, which was to try to discover in what the misapprehension consisted, and which of the two, the Amir or the Viceroy, was supposed to be labouring under it. Sir L. Pelly, after referring to the *Aide Mémoire* given to Atta Mahomed by Lord Lytton, said that they were the Amir's apprehensions and anxieties that the Viceroy desired to remove. "What apprehensions and anxieties?" asked the Envoy. "The Amir feels none; nor has he ever given the British Government cause for uneasiness." Sir Lewis replied that

the misapprehensions were of long standing, and then went on to specify the Amir's dissatisfaction at not having obtained from Lord Mayo a dynastic guarantee, supporting his plea by quotations from several official documents. The Envoy at once asked for translations of the papers referred to, and then, "having observed that it was necessary in these discussions to proceed link by link of the chain, otherwise confusion would ensue, begged that the meeting might now terminate."¹

The translations asked for² were sent to Nur Mahomed on the morning of the 3rd, and the same day there was an unofficial interview between the two Envoys in which Nur Mahomed showed clearly that his mind was still full of the anxiety which he had revealed to Dr. Bellew.³

At the meeting of the 5th February, the British Pleni-

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1879), pp. 197—98.

² These were translations of the wishes and requests submitted by the Amir, either in person or through his Minister, or through the British Agent in 1869 and 1873, taken in connection with the Viceroy's letter to the Amir, dated 11th October, 1876, paragraph 6:—

Discussion, dated July 1873, at page 20 of volume "Affairs of Central Asia, 1872—75."

The Amir's requests made in May 1873; *vide* page 19 of above-mentioned volume.

Paragraph 8 of Note, dated 29th March, 1869.

Paragraph 3 of a letter from the Punjab Government to the Foreign Secretary, dated Umballa, 1st April, 1869.

³ At this interview Sir L. Pelly read over to Nur Mahomed the *Aide Mémoire* which Lord Lytton had given to Atta Mahomed, and promised to telegraph to Calcutta for leave to furnish him with a copy of it

potentiary having reiterated his assertion that the Amir was not satisfied with the old treaty, and that on that account the present Viceroy had offered him a new one much more favourable to his dynasty and power, on certain conditions which he must be assumed to have accepted,—the Envoy asked whether he was to understand that all the existing agreements, from the time of Lord Lawrence down to the time of Lord Northbrook, were annulled. “I have no authority to annul any treaty, only to revise and supplement that of 1855,” was Sir Lewis Pelly’s answer. “But supposing the present Viceroy makes a treaty with us, and, after he has gone, another Viceroy wishes to revise and supplement it—what are we to do?” enquired Nur Mahomed; to which awkward question Sir Lewis could only reply that there could be no objection to revising a treaty with which the Amir had expressed himself dissatisfied.

But Nur Mahomed would not allow that the Amir had expressed dissatisfaction, nor would he consent to accept the treaty of 1855 as the only agreement existing between the Afghan and the British Governments. Such admissions would at once have opened the door to the Viceroy’s demand to be allowed to place British Officers in Afghanistan, and although Nur Mahomed did not say that the Afghan Government would never, under any circumstances, accept the “preliminary condition,” he yet claimed the right—a right which, in sending him to Simla, the Amir had expressly reserved—to state all its objections to that condition. “Let me speak all that is in my mind,” was his appeal to Sir Lewis Pelly, “and let every word I utter be written down, that, when I have concluded my argument, you may weigh it long and earnestly;

then give your decision, and when I have heard it and thought over it in my turn, you shall know mine." And the British Plenipotentiary consented to listen, and sat silent, whilst during three consecutive sittings, under great difficulties—for his illness was rapidly increasing upon him—the Afghan Envoy struggled and fought for the old friendship on the old basis, striving to force his adversary—for that was what he felt Sir Lewis Pelly to be—to understand that, in demanding the establishment of British Officers on the Afghan frontiers, Lord Lytton was asking what was subversive of that friendship, and incompatible with the full confidence which he claimed as a right from the Amir.

The trusted friend of Shere Ali, his companion at Ambala, his representative in Seistan and at Simla, Nur Mahomed knew every link of the chain which, during twenty-one years, had been slowly and carefully forged by the wisdom of British and Afghan Statesmen, to bind their respective countries each to each, and he would not let one of those links slip through his fingers, or be cut away by this new Viceroy on whom the office, but not the spirit, of his predecessors had devolved. Some passages of the papers on which Sir Lewis Pelly had relied as proving the Amir's dissatisfaction in the past and his willingness, in 1869, to accept the condition against which he now rebelled—the Kabul Envoy disputed, on the ground that they did not tally with the Afghan record of the Ambala Conference; others he admitted to be correct; but he steadily refused to allow that the Amir had returned to his country in anxiety of mind, or that his feelings at that period, or his subsequent conduct, should be judged apart from the letter, in which Lord Mayo

had embodied the conclusions at which he and his guest had finally arrived.

Nor was Nur Mahomed more accommodating in the matter of those "wishes" of the Amir which Lord Lytton insisted on fulfilling; and he had no difficulty in showing that from the time of the Ambala Conference up to the present hour, his master had pressed no political wishes on the British Government. All advances tending to a change in the mutual relations of the two States had come from the British side. It was not the Amir who, in 1873, had sought to enter upon fresh "parleys" with the Indian Government, but Lord Northbrook who had expressed a desire to communicate to the Amir the decision of the Seistan Arbitration Referee, and the result of the long negotiations between Great Britain and Russia with regard to the limits of Afghanistan; and the Amir to gratify that wish had deputed him—Nur Mahomed—to wait upon that Viceroy. Again, it was Lord Northbrook who, at the Simla Conference, had introduced the subject of Russia and had said "of his own accord" that in case of a violation of the Afghan frontier by a foreign enemy, the English would, probably, help the Afghans to repel the aggressors. He himself had told Mr. Seton-Karr that the previous pledges were sufficient, but that if the Indian Government thought differently, then it must understand that the people of Afghanistan would not be satisfied with indefinite promises of assistance; and he had spoken in the same terms to the Viceroy. After that the subject of the promises which would content the Afghan people had been discussed at length; "nothing had been left unconsidered;" and, yet, the upshot of the whole matter was that no change was

made in the relations of the two countries, for, as the Amir expressed it in his letter to Lord Northbrook, "that very arrangement and agreement at Ambala is sufficient, so long as from the side of Her Most Gracious Majesty, the great Queen of England, the foundation of friendship shall remain intact and stable. Please God Almighty, from the side of this supplicant at the Divine Throne, also the foundation of friendship will remain strong and firm as at the time of the interview at Ambala, where I met Lord Mayo, whose authority is in my hand, as also the document of Lord Lawrence, which is now in my possession."

After the vindication of Shere Ali from the charge of having so forced his wishes on the attention of the British Government that he was now bound to submit to their fulfilment, clogged with any conditions which Lord Lytton might see fit to attach to his favours—Nur Mahomed glanced at the still more dangerous assumption which had been put forward to bolster up Lord Lytton's demand for the opening of Afghanistan to Englishmen, official and unofficial—the assumption, namely, that without such mutual freedom of access there could be no friendship between the two States. By implication he had already shown that the exclusion of Englishmen from Afghanistan was the basis on which the friendship between that country and Great Britain had been founded by Dost Mahomed and Lord Lawrence, and on which it had been confirmed by Shere Ali and Lord Mayo; now he recalled and pressed home the facts that Lord Northbrook had accepted the Amir's reasons for declining to permit Colonel Valentine Baker to pass through his dominions, and that the friendship between the two Govern-

ments had not suffered from this refusal, for Lord Northbrook, in his farewell letter to Shere Ali, had written that he left it on the same footing as before, and that his successor would continue to uphold it.

There was no grievance then in the Amir's mind with respect to the matters referred to by Sir L. Pelly; yet discontent had really found place in it in connection with other questions, and if the British Plenipotentiary would permit him to mention some of the causes of this discontent, in a friendly and unofficial way, without provoking controversy by a reply, he, the Envoy, would gladly do so.

The desired permission having been accorded to him, Nur Mahomed named four acts of the British Government as having aroused distrust and displeasure in the minds of the Amir and his subjects.

1. The neglect of that Government to take any notice of a petition from the chiefs of Baluchistan to Shere Ali,¹ asking him to settle their differences, which petition the Amir had forwarded for its consideration.

2. The interference of Lord Northbrook in favour of Yakub Khan.

3. The sending of presents to the Mir of Wakhan, a feudatory of Afghanistan, without the Amir's permission having first been asked, and obtained.

4. The Seistan Award.

(On the first of these four causes of discontent Nur Mahomed laid no stress; it was, at worst, but an offence against

¹ Previous to the war of 1838—42, the Amir of Kabul stood in the relation of suzerain to the Chiefs of Baluchistan.

courtesy, since Shere Ali could not have hoped that the British Government would sanction the renewal of a connection which had been severed so long:—but on the other three he based his plea for the abandonment of the fatal preliminary condition, arguing that, if there had been cause for *anxiety* (*andesha*) in acts which, though they violated, in some degree, the British pledges to respect the sovereign rights of the Amir and the integrity of his dominions, were, yet, but trivial matters—the result of the proposal to place British officers on the Afghan frontiers must be *remorse* (*pashemani*).

Then once again he passed in review the decision arrived at with regard to this same proposal by Lord Lawrence who “was very well acquainted with the circumstances of Afghanistan, to whom its good and evil were clearly known,”—and the confirmation of that decision by Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook, and ended by imploring the British Government not “to scatter away former assurances,” but to consider “the true facts of the state of affairs in Afghanistan, with justice and impartiality.”

That Government knew well that the Afghans had a dread of this proposal, and that it was firmly fixed in their minds and deeply rooted in their hearts that, if Englishmen, or other Europeans, once set foot in their country, it would, sooner or later, pass out of their hands. In no way could they be reassured on this point, and it was impossible to remove these convictions from their minds, for they adduced many proofs in support of them. But the convictions of the people of Afghanistan being such, the protection of Englishmen in the midst of the hill tribes was difficult—nay,

impossible. And, besides this danger from the fierce independence of the Afghan people, the Amir had enemies who, to mar the friendship of the two governments, would secretly kill some sahib. Had not such men murdered the Commander-in-Chief of the Amir's army in the very midst of twenty thousand of his troops? Now, the Amir would have to protect the sahibs with his army; but if that army had not availed him to protect the life of his own Commander-in-Chief, in what manner could he protect the life of any other person?

Again, if, at any time, a disturbance or revolution should occur in Afghanistan, the sahibs would be certainly destroyed. But if, from one cause or other, they should be killed, what would be the consequences? Eternal reproach and bitterness against Afghanistan, and the changing of the friendship with the English Government into enmity.

Three years before, an English officer had been murdered between the frontiers of the two States,¹ and the efforts of the Amir to obtain satisfaction for the British Government for this outrage—efforts which had earned the approval of Lord Northbrook—had resulted in nothing but the loss of many lives, the defection of Nauroz Khan² and the closing of the Khyber road, owing to the resentment of the people. And what would be the consequence should such an occurrence happen on those far-distant frontiers, the inhabitants of which comprised people of all sorts of tribes?

¹ Major Macdonald.

² Governor of Lallpura, and a connection by marriage of the Amir.

In the proposal to place British Officers on those frontiers, besides the immediate loss of reputation and injury to Afghanistan, there lay the seed of bitterness of feeling and a certainty of the alienation of the two Governments, either then, or later. Under the present arrangement nothing had occurred contrary to friendship, and so long as the Amir held to it, confirmed, as it was, by writings and documents of the British Government, no blame could attach to him; but if he suffered himself to be persuaded to depart from it, and to undertake what he could not perform, not only would he be put to shame in the eyes of all nations, but he would incur the reproaches of the very Government that imposed upon him an impossible task, and bring trouble upon his kingdom.

Sir Lewis Pelly had said, on the first day of the Conference, that he desired to remove any anxieties that might be in the mind of the Amir—now let him say whether, in demanding the admission of British Officers to Afghanistan, he was proposing what would remove an old anxiety, or raise a fresh one, not only in the mind of the Amir, but in the minds of all his people?

The Afghan Envoy closed his long and weighty address with the following words:—

“Therefore I now expect from the great, civilized English Government that they will well weigh the several arguments I have adduced in conversations and discussions, and the quotations I have made from papers and documents, as well as what I have said on the head of the customary usage and the impracticability of this proposal, owing to the views of the people of Afghanistan and the actual condition of

their country, in order that they may arrive at a just and correct opinion as to who has the right on his side and what is best. And I beg that the English Government will not raise a question which will abrogate the former treaties and agreements and the past usage, in order that the friendship should continue strong on the same footing as hitherto."

It is easy to see why Nur Mahomed had asked to be allowed to state his case without interruption. He felt that much might depend on its clear and accurate statement, and he could not trust himself to preserve a calm and courteous tone if once discussion were admitted, and altercation followed on discussion. There was a hot fire of resentment burning in the breast of the sick man—resentment of the cruel pressure that was being put upon the Amir, and, in his heart, a fierce disgust of the quibbles, to which the Viceroy had not been ashamed to resort in order to escape from the obligations bequeathed to him by his predecessors; and, under contradiction, that resentment and disgust might have blazed forth in indignant words. Had he not once already been betrayed into an expression of despairing impatience, when, after he had carefully explained why Shere Ali had *not* left Ambala with a mind ill-at-ease, Sir Lewis Pelly had remarked that the Amir's anxiety was probably due to the fact that the British Government had not deemed it necessary to formulate all the Amir's wishes in a treaty?—"I hope our friendship will always remain strong and lasting on both sides," Nur Mahomed burst out, "in accordance with the old agreements"—those old agreements of which he never for a moment lost sight, to which he clung with

pathetic confidence in their efficacy to keep his prince and country from all harm;—"but if such very serious discussions are to arise in the path of friendship at any time, upon doubtful expressions, it gives room for much regret and despair."

The despair thus hastily alluded to must have taken complete possession of Nur Mahomed's soul as he listened, three days after the conclusion of his statement, to the British Plenipotentiary's rejoinder,¹ for its very first words must have convinced him that all he had urged had been spoken in vain. Lord Lytton had laid it down as an undeniable fact, that Shere Ali had left Ambala a dissatisfied and anxious man, and it was quite useless therefore, so far as Sir Lewis Pelly was concerned, to prove that he had done nothing of the sort, and that the anxiety which had subsequently grown up in his mind, was due to causes other than those to which it suited Lord Lytton's purpose to ascribe it. Not content with reiterating assertions which had just been refuted, the British Plenipotentiary proceeded to draw from the grievances which Nur Mahomed had named as really troubling the Amir, all of which it must be borne in mind appeared to Shere Ali in the light of infractions of his own, or his country's, independence,—the conclusion that, if the crowning violation of that independence, against which he had sent his Envoy to protest, had been consummated years before,—had an intelligent British Officer been at the Amir's elbow from Ambala days to the present time—no such grievances would ever have arisen; a conclusion which seems to rest

¹ February 15th, 1877.

upon the assumption that the larger grievance would have swallowed up all minor ones.

"The Viceroy," Sir Lewis Pelly went on to say, "having given every practicable consideration to the circumstances of the past relations between the two Governments, and having carefully studied the position of the Amir in relation to the existing political situation in Central Asia,—a situation which shows that the integrity and independence of Afghanistan and the consolidation of the Amir's rule may ere long be imperilled,—deems it equitable, and for the common interest of both Governments, that he should inform the Amir of his willingness to accord him (the Amir) open and active support against the danger of interference from without.

"The Viceroy further desires that this concession should be unaccompanied by any demands on his part whatsoever, or by any conditions other than such as are reasonable in themselves, or plainly necessary to enable him to fulfil the obligations which he would undertake in ratifying a Treaty of the contemplated character. That among these conditions is one which is so obviously essential to the proposed undertaking that it would be futile to open negotiations except this condition should be agreed upon as a preliminary, viz.: the admission, on the part of the Amir, of the principle that the British Government shall be allowed to station British Agents on the frontiers, which this Government undertakes to aid in defending; for it is manifest that the Viceroy could not pretend to protect those frontiers, except he should be enabled to collect, through his responsible Agents, timely intelligence of what might be passing on, or beyond them, and so prepare himself for meeting contingencies,

and for explaining to her Majesty's Government, from independent, unprejudiced and official sources, the facts of any alleged aggression, and the necessity which existed for repelling the same."

The statements contained in this passage are simply monstrous. To call a treaty for which Shere Ali had certainly never asked Lord Lytton, and which was being forced on his acceptance, a *concession*, was a cruel insult; and what can be said of the distinction drawn between *d demands* and *conditions*, when every one of the *conditions* contained in the *Aide Mémoire* given to Atta Mahomed, was, both in form and substance, a *demand*; or of the assumption that every such condition was *reasonable* and *necessary*, one supremely so—the condition which Nur Mahomed had solemnly declared must prove fatal to the independence of Afghanistan and to the friendship with the British Government?

But worse was to follow, viz., the repudiation of every agreement between the two Governments, except the Treaty of 1855, by which, as Sir L. Pelly was careful to remind his hearer, the Viceroy was not bound to aid the Amir against his enemies, either foreign or domestic; whilst, if its first article provided for perpetual friendship between the two Governments, such friendship between States implied *good neighbourhood*, and good neighbourhood, in Lord Lytton's eyes meant, as we already know, not only the reception of British Officers in the Afghan frontier towns, but the opening up of Afghanistan to all British subjects.

If the Amir rejected all the Indian Government offered and asked, and no basis of negotiation were left, the Viceroy, while observing the terms of the Treaty of 1855, would

decline to support the Amir in any troubles, internal or external, and their unknown consequences, and would continue to strengthen the frontier of British India without further reference to the Amir. But, if once the "preliminary" principle were accepted, Sir Lewis Pelly would be happy to discuss, in the most friendly and fair manner, the details of a formal agreement under which the British Government would bind itself, not only to a defensive and offensive alliance, but to the public recognition of the Amir's heir and to affording his Highness support against factious disturbance within his dominions.

The bribe was a high one, and Nur Mahomed could not know, though he might suspect, that these pledges were to be so worded as to leave the British Government practically free as regarded the fulfilment of them; nevertheless he took no notice of the Viceroy's offers, but merely remarked when the Plenipotentiary ceased speaking, that he did not understand what was meant by "strengthening the British frontier without further reference to the Amir;" and when Sir L. Pelly had replied that it meant that "the Viceroy would take such measures as he might deem wise and lawful for strengthening the frontier of British India and providing for the safety and repose of that Empire, and this without communication with the Amir," he asked again, "Does this mean within the territories of the Amir of Afghanistan, or otherwise?"

"I have already stated," Sir Lewis Pelly replied, "that the object of the present Conference is not to interfere with Afghanistan. I have also stated that the Viceroy will observe the terms of the Treaty of 1855, even if the proposed negotiations do not have place. I now repeat that the Viceroy

has no intention of interfering with the jurisdiction of the Amir in any territory where we have recognized that jurisdiction."

It is difficult to conceive the bitterness of soul in which the dying Prime Minister of Afghanistan must have quitted the Conference Chamber that day; for he saw all that was implied in this limitation of the British Government's engagements with Afghanistan to those contained in the Treaty of 1855, coupled with the Viceroy's statement that he had no intention of interfering with the jurisdiction of the Amir *in any territory where we had recognized that jurisdiction*, knowing, as he did, that when that treaty was signed, *neither Herat, nor Kandahar formed part of the territory over which Dost Mahomed's jurisdiction extended.*

On the 19th of February the two Envoys met for the last time. Neither can have suspected that this was to be their final interview, though Nur Mahomed probably felt that, for him, the end not only of the Conference, but of life itself was not far off, and, in that conviction, found strength to plead once more his country's and his sovereign's cause. He had promised to give an answer to the British Agent's condition that day, but, for the moment, he put it aside, and addressed himself to the task of proving that the Treaty of 1855 was not the only engagement binding Great Britain to Afghanistan. It was not by this treaty, of which he had made no mention, that Nur Mahomed stood, but by the Treaty of 1857, with its seventh clause excluding British Officers from Afghanistan, a clause which had never been abrogated, though the rest of the Treaty had lapsed; by Lord Mayo's promise to respect the independence

and integrity of Afghanistan—the Afghanistan in which both Kandahar and Herat were included; and by Lord Northbrook's communications to Shere Ali as to the agreement come to between England and Russia with regard to the boundaries of the Afghan Kingdom.

He did not, in so many words, accuse Lord Lytton of plotting to rob the Amir of any portion of his territories; but in arguing that his Sovereign had no reason to fear a Russian violation of the frontiers determined for him by the good offices of the British Government, he showed Sir Lewis Pelly that he had seen through his equivocal answers and was strong to meet them, so far as justice and the facts of the case can strengthen a weak State against a powerful one.—The limits which England has imposed upon Russia, shall she not respect them herself? Lord Northbrook's assurances that the Amir need fear no aggression or interference in the territories specified in Lord Granville's letter of the 17th October, 1872, have they no application to the Government in whose name they were written? Have we been preserved from the jaws of the Russian Bear only that the British Lion may devour us at his leisure?—All these bitter questions tingle and burn through the calm, dry arguments by which Nur Mahomed maintained his former contention that Shere Ali could not be tormented by anxiety, either before, or after, the Simla Conference, because he had confidence in British good will and British power, and because Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook had assured him that he had no grounds for fear; and there can be no doubt that Sir L. Pelly understood the Afghan Envoy's line of defence as fully as the latter understood the former's line of attack.

“The authorities of the Government of Afghanistan have the most perfect confidence that there can be no deviation from the tenor of these writings, which have been briefly mentioned, in respect to the peace and tranquillity and lasting friendship of the States, in accordance with the reply of his Highness, the Amir, to the letter of Lord Northbrook of the 6th September, 1873. If there should be a want of confidence in the substance of these successive writings approved by Governments, or the probability of a causeless want of confidence in them becoming a reason for displeasure to the Governments, what propriety is there in this? It is far from the welfare of States, if there should be the possibility of objection to the promises made by such religious Governments and such Ministers and Viceroys. If the authorities of the Government of Afghanistan were, without cause, to think there was the probability of objection to the treaties and agreements they have in their hands, it would undoubtedly be contrary to confidence and amity and friendship.” With these lofty words the Envoy dismissed the question of the true limits of Afghanistan, and turned once more to the task of trying to make Sir L. Pelly understand why the preliminary demand, or condition, as he preferred to call it, was *not* reasonable, nor obviously essential. He put aside Sir L. Pelly’s assertion that misapprehensions had arisen owing to want of knowledge on the part of the Amir. The things which had displeased his master, had been done *with* knowledge, not *without* knowledge, and they had been adduced by him—Nur Mahomed—to show that in every case the real cause of offence had been an infraction of the Amir’s rights, or an inattention to the formalities of friendship.

He—the Envoy—did not entertain the idea of external danger to his country; but the dangers that must arise from British Officers on the frontier were apparent and admitted of no doubt. He had nothing to say about a new treaty—that could wait: the matter in hand was to prove the binding force of previous agreements, from the Treaty of 1857 down to the last letter written by Lord Northbrook before his departure from India; for all these were connected together; they were not separate, but one; and what one and all established or confirmed, was the right of the Amir to exclude Europeans from his dominions, a right which the Government of Afghanistan could never consent to surrender.

The Envoy repudiated the responsibility for the maintenance of the cordial and intimate relations of the two States which the Viceroy had sought to fix upon the Amir. It was not Shere Ali, but Lord Lytton, whose acts were opposed to the spirit which had animated the discussions at Ambala. His Excellency had asked the Amir to afford him the “means” of showing his favour towards him—he, Nur Mahomed, begged to say that no better “means” existed than those of the past.

The Amir had been warned not to reject his own advantage:—did men ever reject their own advantage? The cordial desire of the Viceroy for Shere Ali’s advantage had shown itself in such new and hard conditions that the Amir had no choice but to reject them. Sir L. Pelly had stated that, unless the Amir agreed to the essential preliminary condition, the British Government could not take upon itself any responsibility for the defence of his frontiers, and had further said that it had no wish to embarrass the Amir in

the matter of the carrying out of this proposal. Now, he begged to say, that the Amir was glad to be relieved from this embarrassment. Being freed from it, he had no other weighty matter to lay before the English Government, on which he did *not* put the responsibility of repelling the attacks of an external enemy, nor of protecting his frontier.

It was for the Viceroy to consider "all the treaties and agreements and writings," to which reference had been made; "all the assurances of the Indian Government," which had been brought forward that day; all the difficulties, inherent in the condition of Afghanistan itself, which stood in the way of the realization of his desire to place his own Officers on the Afghan frontier. He—the Kabul Envoy—could only earnestly hope that, through the good offices of Sir L. Pelly, Lord Lytton would be brought to act "with great frankness and sincerity of purpose," in conformity with the course of past Viceroys, and that, "by means of his own good acts, the relations of friendship and unity might be increased."

As for there being no basis for negotiation left—there would still be the basis laid for the present Government of India by the wise arrangements of its predecessors, arrangements which had been approved by the Queen herself. Friendship had been maintained on that basis for a very long time, and the Afghan Government was certain that the British Government "of its own perfect honesty would continue constant and stable to that firm basis."

When the Kabul Envoy ceased speaking, the angry disappointment of the English Plenipotentiary found vent in

harsh and sneering words.¹ So, the Envoy had declined the *sine quâ non* preliminary! That was the point before them, and he, Sir Lewis, declined to go off into controversy. But since the Envoy had stated that the Amir had always adhered to the terms of the old treaty, he would ask him whether he considered the refusal to receive temporary and special missions; the rejection of British agents; the absolute and permanent closing of Afghanistan against British subjects and their trade; and the denial to an English traveller of a passage towards British India—were acts of friendship and good neighbourhood, or consonant with the spirit of the first article of the Treaty still subsisting? The Envoy might be satisfied now with the assurances received from General Kaufmann, but he could not have forgotten the representations which the Amir had made to the Government of India as to his fear of Russian aggressions. All these matters, however, were for the judgment of the Afghan Government—England had no reason to dread Russia. The preliminary condition having been rejected, he—Sir Lewis—had no authority to open negotiations; he would, however, refer what the Envoy had said to the Viceroy, though he felt bound to say that there was no probability of the British Government's consenting to treat on any other terms, and he feared that the Amir had missed an opportunity, which might never recur, of greatly strengthening his power.

At the conclusion of Sir L. Pelly's remarks, the Kabul Envoy requested that all that he himself had said that day

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pp. 211—212.

might be submitted to the Viceroy, on receipt of whose reply, he would state what he thought expedient, or inexpedient, in his Excellency's decision, and then either give a definite answer, or refer to the Amir for further instructions.

And so the sitting ended, and Nur Mahomed quitted the conference chamber, carrying with him the intimate conviction that he had pleaded and argued in vain. The man who could accuse the Amir of infringing the Treaty of 1855 by acts which the whole course of the subsequent relations between Great Britain and Afghanistan had sanctioned, and who could not see that the injury to the friendship established by that treaty, lay with the state that was endeavouring to give to the term meanings which Lord Lawrence never dreamed of attaching to it—was a man impervious to reasons and proofs, because blind to honesty and justice.

The sneering taunt cast at Nur Mahomed's political appreciation of events in Central Asia, as shown by his credulous confidence in Kaufmann's letters; the ignoring of the facts he had cited to prove that that confidence rested not so much on the Russian General's promises as on Lord Mayo's confirmation of them—a confirmation which Lord Northbrook, in his turn, confirmed, going so far as to discourage the Amir from spending his resources on unnecessary military preparations; the contemptuous dismissal of the whole subject as one concerning Afghanistan alone; the boast that England had no reason to fear Russia—one and all these things must have served to clear the Envoy's mind of any hope still lingering in it, that the justice of the cause he had so worthily advocated would yet prevail.

During all those many weeks of waiting for the Viceroy's

reply, the dying Afghan Minister's soul must have been dark and heavy within him, and his thoughts full of bitterness; for he knew that he had spoken no idle words when he told Sir Lewis Pelly that the fruit of the *acceptance* of British officers would be "repentance," and he could not conceal from himself that the fruit of their *rejection* might be to Afghanistan, the loss, with or without war, of any portion of her territory not guaranteed to her by the Treaty of 1855, on which Lord Lytton and his military advisers might cast covetous eyes, and he must have relinquished all hope of shaking the Viceroy's determination to force that fatal choice upon the Amir. One thing only it was still in his power to do—namely, to clear his master from the aspersion cast upon him by Sir Lewis Pelly of having been false to the only treaty which Lord Lytton chose to acknowledge, and to this duty he consecrated the moments in which increasing pain and weakness would allow him still to work.

Once during that interval of suspense, a ray of light pierced the darkness enshrouding him; this was when Sir Lewis Pelly communicated the "agreeable telegram," in which Lord Lytton had authorized him to express to the Envoy his thanks for the care he had taken to explain fully the Amir's views and feelings; but the arrival of the Viceroy's written instructions to his representative quenched that feeble flame.

CHAPTER VII

THE VICEROY'S LETTER

THE last meeting between the British and Afghan plenipotentiaries had taken place on the 19th of February, and, on the 15th of March, Sir Lewis Pelly addressed to Nur Mahomed a letter in which he set forth the final instructions of the Viceroy, which letter,¹ for convenience' sake, will be treated here as written by Lord Lytton himself, whose actual words it reproduced.

The Viceroy had had laid before him Nur Mahomed's statement of the Afghan case, taken down, word by word, as it had been spoken, and he now began his refutation of that statement by dividing it into two parts; the one referring to the past, the other to the present. The first, which included all the Kabul Envoy's arguments bearing on the former relations of Great Britain and Afghanistan, all his proofs that a good understanding had existed between their respective governments on the basis which the Amir was now asked to abandon—he thrust contemptuously aside; only pausing before passing on to matters more worthy of attention, to express his conviction that the resentment which the Amir had long, apparently, been harbouring in his mind, would never have gained an entrance there, had

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pp. 214—220.

he admitted to "unrestricted intercourse" with himself "an intelligent British officer," and his regret that the "rude and stationary condition" in which Afghanistan had remained during Shere Ali's administration, should still prevent that prince from receiving a British Envoy at his court.

"The real drift and purport" of the second portion of the Envoy's statement, Lord Lytton confessed himself almost unable to understand. So far as he did apprehend it, it seemed to amount to this—that the Amir, though dissatisfied with the result of his relations with the British Government up to the present day, was equally dissatisfied with all the proposals made for their improvement; whilst, at the same time, he had no counter-proposals of his own to offer.

Of the three propositions contained in the foregoing paragraph, the first is untrue in itself, or, at least, untrue as a representation of what Nur Mahomed had asserted; the second was incapable of proof, as the benevolent intentions of the British Government had never been discussed between the two plenipotentiaries; and the third cannot be looked upon as a matter of reproach, since it is hardly a political offence to have no counter-proposals to make when one is content with things as they are, or sees that one can only change them for the better in one respect, at the cost of making them very much worse in another.

Having thus given proof of his own intelligence and fair-mindedness, the Viceroy went on to take Nur Mahomed to task for having wasted time in combating demands that had never been preferred by the British Government, and that he was not justified in attributing to it, to the entire neglect of the proposal which alone he was at liberty to

discuss. He had been at infinite pains to explain why a British Envoy could not be received at Kabul—a step to which the Amir's assent had not been asked—and he had taken no notice of the request to admit British officers to other parts of Afghanistan. Let him now state distinctly and promptly what were his instructions in this matter. For a plain answer to this plain question, no reference to Kabul was necessary.

Accustomed as one has become by this time to Lord Lytton's habit of inventing, or misstating, the facts from which he desired to argue, it is impossible to read without a shock of surprise the accusation brought by him against Nur Mahomed, of combating demands which had never been preferred, and neglecting the proposal which alone he was authorized to discuss, knowing, as one does, that the Afghan Envoy's statement contained no allusion to a British Mission at Kabul, and that "the whole drift and purport" of his historical argument went to prove that it would be impossible for the Amir to protect the lives of British officers on "far distant frontiers," in the midst of wild hill tribes. Possibly Lord Lytton would have written the truth had he seen it; but his mind was so preoccupied by his own views and aims that he could not grasp those of other people; and he constantly read into their words what it suited his purposes to find there. This preoccupation, or criminal inattention, in studying the documents on which he had to pass judgment, are the only explanations which can save him from the imputation of having knowingly resorted to falsehood on this and many other occasions, when driven into a corner by the unanswerable logic of an opponent.

Having attacked Nur Mahomed's statements, Lord Lytton thought it prudent to place his own above comment, or refutation.—The Kabul Envoy had expressed a desire to discuss the expediency, or in expediency of his—the Viceroy's—conclusions, but such superfluous criticism could not be permitted. The Amir had taken ample time to consider the preliminary proposal submitted to him through Atta Mahomed; he had been informed that its acceptance was essential to the commencement of negotiations, and by sending an Envoy to Peshawar he had signified his agreement with it—therefore Nur Mahomed's conduct in discussing it at all was a breach of the understanding on which the Viceroy had consented to receive him. In his—Lord Lytton's—opinion, the offer to station British Officers on the Afghan frontier was “a great concession” made by the British Government to the Amir; and unless the latter “specially invited” and “cordially welcomed” their presence and “solemnly guaranteed their personal safety and comfort,” the former would certainly not allow its officers to reside in his dominions. It had no desire to pin his Highness “pedantically” to an understanding from which he now wished to withdraw. If, therefore, the Amir objected to placing his relations with Great Britain on a new and better footing, the two Governments would revert to their former relative positions; but it was imperative that the Envoy should be made to understand what those positions really were, as he seemed completely to misapprehend them, imagining, apparently, that the British Government was already bound to support and defend his sovereign against any foreign, or domestic enemy, and that, consequently, the Amir “had nothing to gain by a new treaty of Alliance which, so far

as the British Government was concerned, would be a mere re-statement of the obligations it had already contracted on his behalf, whilst, so far as his Highness was concerned, it would impose upon him obligations altogether new."

It is impossible not to help admiring the transformations which "the essential preliminary" underwent during these negotiations. Originally, in the eyes of Shere Ali and his people, the most hateful of *demands*, it appeared in the *Aide-Mémoire* given to Atta Mahomed under the friendly form of a *condition* attached to the most desirable of concessions; now, in Lord Lytton's latest Instructions, it has turned into a *concession* itself, a boon so great that the British Government half hesitates to bestow it. But, perhaps, the Viceroy, who certainly had had cause to wince under Nur Mahomed's grave irony, was trying to make use of the same weapon; and the "concession" was no more to be taken seriously by the Envoy, than Lord Lytton had been expected to take seriously Nur Mahomed's assurance of perfect confidence in his readiness "to acknowledge, in their exactitude, all the conditions and agreements" that his predecessors had made with the Afghan Government.

Leaving this point unsettled, we have to consider whether Lord Lytton was justified in rebuking Nur Mahomed for his persistent attempts to induce the British Government to abstain from forcing its "concession" on the Amir. The light in which the proposal to place British Officers in Afghanistan had all along been regarded by Shere Ali and his Durbar, was well known. They had made no secret of their objections to it to Atta Mahomed, and he had truthfully reported their arguments and described their excitement

and alarm. If, in the end, overborne by the pressure put upon him directly by the Vakil, and indirectly by military measures which menaced the independence and integrity of Afghanistan on every side, the Amir had consented to send an Envoy to Peshawar on the basis laid down by the Viceroy, the latter had been warned that he did so under compulsion—"from helplessness"—and that he still claimed the right to make representations as to the difficulties which beset the execution of the preliminary condition. Thus, though technically and "pedantically," the Amir may be said to have agreed to the principle of British Agents on his frontiers, it is impossible to deny that he was entitled to explain his reason for objecting to it. This was all Nur Mahomed had done; and, considering the arguments he employed and the facts reported by the Vakil, it was unfair to speak of the Amir as having "completely changed his mind" since entering upon negotiations.

Nor does a careful study of the records of the Peshawar Conference support the Viceroy's summary of Nur Mahomed's arguments with regard to the relative positions of the English and Afghan Governments. Here again Lord Lytton seems to have missed "the drift and purport" of the Kabul Envoy's contention which was—*not* that the former Government was bound by existing engagements to defend the Amir against external and internal foes, but that the observance of the engagements into which it had entered with that prince *had actually*, during many years, secured Afghanistan against external aggression and internal disturbance, and would, if faithfully adhered to, continue to do this; whilst, if Russia should ever attack his borders, the Amir

reckoned upon the instinct of self-interest to bring India to his aid. If the Envoy had quoted Lord Northbrook and had referred to the different points that had been discussed between that Viceroy and himself at Simla, it was not to press any claims upon his successor, nor to imply that unconditional assurances of assistance had in 1873 been made through him—Nur Mahomed—to Shere Ali, but simply to support his contention that, after all subjects of interest to the two Governments had been fully considered, the old agreements had proved sufficient for the maintenance of friendly relations advantageous to both.

Those old relations were, however, so little satisfactory to the British Government in 1877, that, in order to replace them by others of a more intimate nature, Lord Lytton felt called upon to begin by sweeping away the foundation on which the Afghan Envoy had presumptuously supposed them to rest. The Treaty of 1857 contained only one article—the seventh—which was not transitory in its character; and of that the Viceroy could only say that it was quite superfluous, as it was “obvious that no Treaty stipulation was required to oblige the British Government not to appoint a resident British Agent at Kabul without the consent of the Amir, for it was not practically in the power of one State to accredit a representative to the Court or Government of another, without the consent of that Court or Government, nor could such an absurd idea ever occur to the Government of any civilized Power.” Neither could that clause bind the Amir never, under any circumstances, or at any future time, to assent to the appointment of a resident British Officer at Kabul, for such a stipulation would have

been clearly "inconsistent with the freedom and dignity of the two contracting powers." The seventh article, therefore, contained nothing to preclude the British Government from pointing out, at any time, to the Amir the advantage, or propriety of receiving a British Officer as its permanent representative at Kabul, nor from "urging such an arrangement upon the consideration and adoption of his Highness in any fair and friendly manner." But as the British Government had "not proposed" and did "not intend to propose that arrangement, the Envoy's remarks on the Treaty of 1857 were not to the point and need not be further noticed."

Nur Mahomed must have experienced a shock of pleasant surprise on learning, at one and the same time, from so good an authority as Lord Lytton that no civilized State would, or could, accredit a representative to the Court of another without that Court's consent, and that this impossibility had never entered into the intentions of the British Government; but the pleasure must have been short-lived, for he would immediately remember that among the conditions enumerated in the *Aide Mémoire*, of which he had wisely obtained a copy, there was one that ran thus:—

"(8) The Viceroy will forego the establishment of a permanent Envoy at Kabul on condition:—

(1) That the Amir depute an Envoy to Head Quarters.

(2) That he receive special Missions whenever required."

A man can hardly *forego* what he has never claimed; and therefore Nur Mahomed, on comparing these mutually destructive passages, must have been driven to one of two conclusions:—either that Lord Lytton was afflicted with a memory so bad as to unfit him for the conduct of State

affairs, or else that it was he, not the Amir, who had "completely changed his mind," since entering upon negotiations.

Having disposed of the Treaty of 1857, Lord Lytton went on to repudiate all obligations arising out of the verbal, or written assurances of Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook, and in acquitting himself of this honourable task, he hurled a series of bitter charges against the Amir. Shere Ali had never fulfilled "the excellent intentions," on the strength of which Lord Mayo had promised "to view with severe displeasure" any attempt to disturb his throne; and he had "relaxed" by his "subsequent conduct" the "bonds of friendship" which that Viceroy had established between him and the British Government; also he had shown no wish to deserve the friendship which had been so unreservedly offered him at Ambala. (Can this be the same Amir of whom Lord Mayo wrote "he has evinced the most fervent desire to comply with the wishes of the British Government"?) "He had refused to permit a British Envoy to pass through his dominion." (A proceeding justified by Lord Northbrook.) "He had allowed the murderer of Colonel Macdonald to remain at large, instead of cordially and efficiently co-operating to avenge the crime." ("The Amir without any pressure agreed to every thing which the British Government considered it right to demand as a satisfaction for that incident"—*i.e.* the murder in question—wrote Lord Northbrook in 1878.) He was mainly answerable for the closing during the last 20 years of the Khyber Pass." (That closing was the consequence of the Amir's efforts to do the very thing he had at been accused of not doing, *viz.*, to bring the murderer Major—not Colonel—Macdonald to justice.)

So far, the charges referred to matters with which the reader is acquainted : those that followed were altogether new. Lord Lytton accused Shere Ali of having openly received and subsidised the heads of frontier tribes who were in the pay and under the control of the British Government; of having, for some time past, been speaking and acting in such a way as to indicate hostile designs on territories beyond his own, and in the neighbourhood of British territory; and of having ever since the commencement of the negotiations still proceeding, openly and actively endeavoured to excite against the British Government the religious animosities of his own subjects and of the neighbouring tribes by misrepresenting the policy and maligning the character of that Government.

It will be convenient to leave these grave charges undiscussed until the remaining paragraphs of Lord Lytton's Letter of Instructions have been passed in review. In these a distinction was drawn, of which more will be heard hereafter, between the people of Afghanistan and the Amir. With the former the British Government had "no sort or kind of quarrel; it sincerely desired their permanent independence, prosperity and peace;" and they might rest assured that so long as they were not excited by their Ruler to acts of aggression upon the territories, or friends, of that government, no British soldier would ever be permitted to enter Afghanistan uninvited; as regarded the latter, it repudiated all liability, though it did not withdraw from any obligations it had previously contracted towards him, and would scrupulously continue to respect his independence and authority throughout those territories which, up to

the present moment, it had recognised as being in his lawful possession, and would duly abstain from interference in them, so long as he no less scrupulously abstained from every kind of interference with tribes, or territories not his own.

Certain, apparently, that by this time he must have triumphed over the Envoy's prepossessions in favour of the Afghan version of the facts in dispute—Lord Lytton, in conclusion, appealed to Nur Mahomed to acknowledge that he had offered the Amir altogether new and very substantial advantages, and to believe that it was with all sincerity that he had authorized the Native Agent at Kabul to tell that prince that, if he really desired to secure and reciprocate the friendship of the British Government, it should be his without reserve, and he should find in it a firm and faithful ally.

These assurances were flattering enough, and there was this much truth in them that, within the limits imposed by a long list of conditions and concessions, Lord Lytton was, at this time, prepared to treat Shere Ali with a certain amount of liberality: but he had still two things to learn—the first, that broken pledges are a bad foundation for new agreements; the second, that the limits which seemed to him so rational and beneficial to both sides, were such as no Amir of Afghanistan, being a free man and not a mere British puppet like Shah Shuja, could ever accept, except at the point of the sword, and, even then, only with the secret resolve to break through them at the earliest opportunity.

To return now to the new charges which Lord Lytton's

letter brought against Shere Ali.—In the despatch in which the Viceroy subsequently explained and defended his whole conduct towards Afghanistan,¹ these accusations were repeated in a more definite form. “Intelligence had reached the Indian Government,” during the weeks occupied by the Kabul Envoy’s statement, “that the Amir was straining every effort to increase his military force; that he was massing troops on various points of his British frontier; that he was publicly exhorting all his subjects and neighbours to make immediate preparations for a religious war, apparently directed against his English, rather than his Russian neighbours; both of whom he denounced, however, as the traditional enemies of Islam; that, on behalf of this *jehad*, he was urgently soliciting the authoritative support of the Akhund of Swat, and the armed co-operation of the Chiefs of Dir, Bajaur, and other neighbouring Khanates; that, in violation of his engagements with the British Government, he was, by means of bribes, promises and menaces, endeavouring to bring those chiefs and territories under personal allegiance to himself; that he was tampering with the tribes immediately on our frontier, and inciting them to acts of hostility against us; and that, for the prosecution of these objects, he was in correspondence with Mahomedan Border Chiefs openly subsidised by ourselves.”

The despatch then went on to say that Sir Lewis Pelly had brought this intelligence to the knowledge of Nur

¹ Despatch No. 13 of 1877, dated May 10th, 1877, addressed to the Marquis of Salisbury.—See Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pp. 160—172.

Mahomed, who had replied, "that the reports which had reached us of the Amir's utterances and proceedings were, he trusted, much exaggerated; he feared, however, that, since his absence from the Kabul Durbar, his Highness had fallen under mischievous influences which he himself deplored and condemned; he would lose no time in addressing to the Amir strong remonstrances on this subject."

Turning to the substantiatory documents accompanying the despatch, we find the letter in which Sir Lewis Pelly "brought the intelligence of Shere Ali's words and acts to Nur Mahomed's knowledge;" also an extract from a letter of the British Plenipotentiary's to the Viceroy. In the letter Sir Lewis Pelly accused the Afghan Envoy of neglecting to furnish his Master "with full and faithful reports of the attitude of the British Government," and the Amir of intriguing with the Russians and of exciting the people of Afghanistan against the British Government by spreading amongst them wilful and injurious misrepresentations of the objects of the proposed friendly negotiations; he further charged the officials and people of Kabul with unfriendly conduct towards the British Agency in that city; and he ended by demanding that the misrepresentations of which he had complained should be as publicly retracted as they had been publicly made. The extract ran as follows :—

"I have addressed the Envoy as desired in your Lordship's telegram of the 25th inst., (February 1877) and now beg to enclose a copy of my draft. The Envoy has, at once, sent a verbal reply by Atta Mahomed Khan to the effect that he will lose no time in causing the *Jehad*—holy

war—to be put a stop to, and will send me a satisfactory written reply as soon as he is able to work.”¹

Whatever the explanation of the discrepancies which mark the two versions of the message here attributed to Nur Mahomed, it is equally difficult to accept it in either. From the beginning of the Conference to the end, the Afghan Envoy never allowed himself to slip into the smallest admission derogatory to the dignity and honour of the Amir; and it would have been as much at variance with his character for loyalty and caution to take the *Jehad* for granted, and to promise off-hand to put a stop to it, as to offer to address strong remonstrances to his master. That he undertook to send “a satisfactory written reply” is probable; but it was a reply satisfactory from his point of view; and such answer, on the 3rd of March, he duly returned.²

The only admission which this letter contains is that the Envoy had already heard these reports either from Sir Lewis Pelly, or from Atta Mahomed—*their truth he simply denied*. Such stories were doubtless current; they had arisen naturally enough out of the doings of the Conference. Princes were bound to consult their family and chiefs in matters of State. Those chiefs consulted their own people, and so the matter spread from mouth to mouth and, in spreading, was added to and altered. Had not rumours of the entrance of a

¹ Afghanistan, No. 2 (1878), p. 11.

² Letter given in Appendix I. This letter was not published until some time after Lord Lytton's despatch of the 10th of May, 1877, to which, in justice to Nur Mahomed and the Amir, it should have been attached.

British army into the Kuram Valley, and all sorts of surmises as to the designs of the British Government been set afloat, owing to Deputy Commissioner Cavagnari's presence on the Kuram frontier? The Amir had placed no reliance on reports so injurious to the British Government;—why then should that Government give credence to statements injurious to the Amir? The insinuation that he had not given the Amir full and faithful reports of the debates of the Conference, Nur Mahomed repudiated with dignity. As regarded the correspondence with the Russian Authorities, he had no instructions to say anything; but, “for right's sake,” he would mention that every paper received from Russian Officers had been opened, and its wax and seal removed in the presence of the British Native Agent; nor had any answer been returned to such papers contrary to the tenor of that first letter, which had been written to General Kaufmann in consultation with Lord Mayo. No Russian Agents had entered Afghanistan, though carriers had come bearing letters, and in winter had stayed a few days in Kabul. The Envoy could not credit the rumour that the Mayor of Kabul had forbidden the people of that town to visit the Agency quarters, and that the members of the Agency had been treated in an unfriendly way by the Afghan officials:—Atta Mahomed, who was then at Peshawar, could testify that none of the Afghan Nobles, or Chiefs had been more honoured by Shere Ali than he. As to the demand made upon the Amir to retract the libels on the British Government—it was impossible for him to retract what he could not admit to have ever been published.

No doubt rumours with regard to the discussions of the

Conference had gone abroad, which had wildly excited the Afghan people, and, in spreading from mouth to mouth, had assumed exaggerated proportions, and it is more than probable that Nur Mahomed's reports of those discussions had filled Shere Ali and his Council with anxiety and alarm; but for them to have this effect, they did not need to deviate one hair's-breadth from the truth. The documentary evidence, however, furnished by Lord Lytton in support of his assertion that the Amir was preaching a *Jehad*, is meagre and unsatisfactory in the extreme, consisting of the following extracts, one of which is of later date than the letter in which Sir Lewis Pelly brought this charge to the Kabul Envoy's notice.

EXTRACT from CANDAHAR NEWS-LETTER, No. 29, for
the week ending 9th August, 1876.

"A CANDAHARI, who hires out baggage animals in Turkestan, Bokhara, and Cabul, and who has been on friendly terms with the writer (Daod Khan) from his infancy upwards, and who, for the last three or four years has been on intimate terms with Sirdar Mahomed Alam Khan, Loi Naib Bahadur, arrived at Candahar a few days before the death of the Sirdar. On the writer of this letter asking him for the news of the country, he said that Mahomed Alam Khan brought with him to Cabul secretly a Russian, who came from Turkestan. On his arrival at Cabul, by order of the Ameer, he went to reside in the house of Mirza Mahomed Tahir Khan, situated in the quarter of the town called Alli Raza Khan. Of the arrival of this Russian, which is kept secret, only the Ameer, Mahomed Alam Khan, and Mirza Mahomed Tahir Khan knew of it. When the Ameer has interviews with the Russian they take place secretly in the garden of the Fort, where they hold council together. A few days after the

arrival of the Russian the Ameer sent for Mulla Mushk Alam, who is a man trusted by the Ameer, and of note in the country. He lives some distance from the city. The Ameer consulted with him, pointing out that he was on friendly terms with the British Government, that he could now get nothing from them, and was disheartened, and desired to fight with them. He asked, in the event of his doing so, whether the Mullas and Mahomedans would aid him, and whether it would be contrary to their religion to do so. The Mulla replied that, were he (the Ameer) to do so, it would be in accordance with his religion, and would benefit him in this world and in the world to come. Enquiries were made of the Candahari as to whether the British Agent at Cabul, Atta Mahomed Khan, or the Sadr-i-Azim, knew of this occurrence, and he replied in the negative. The writer can fully certify that the Candahari who gave him this news has been, for the last few years, an intimate friend of the late Mahomed Alam Khan; that he felt it to be his duty to give this news as told to him, and that, in writing it, he has only done what was right and proper; that, if true, it is of value, if false, telling what was told to him can do no harm." ¹

Extract from KAZI SYUD AHMED's Diary of News for
the 22nd March, 1877.

"A FEW Chiefs of Kandahar who were discontented with the Ameer have gone over to the side of the English at Khelat, on account of which the Ameer feels very anxious.

"Russian couriers bring letters for the Ameer almost every week by the way of Sheikh Ali through Hazarajat. The Ameer sends answer through Shaghasi Sherdil Kkan, Governor of Turkestan.

"The Ameer is now quiet, does not talk of jihad openly, but

¹ Afghamstan, No. 1 (1878), page 178

preparations are otherwise being made all the same. It is said that the Ameer is waiting for a reply to the letter he has sent to the Russians, asking their advice in his project of *jehad*.”¹

We have no means of verifying the accuracy of the information imparted by Kazi Syud Ahmed, the Munshi (Secretary) left in charge of the Agency at Kabul during Atta Mahomed's absence; but, if the reports mentioned by him had been well-founded, the Indian Government which was busy on the frontier preparing to profit by the dissolution of the old friendship, would have had small reason to complain. The “earthen pipkin,” painfully recognizing that he was between two iron pots, and that he was in more immediate danger from his eastern than from his northern neighbour, might well have been pardoned if he had received and answered the messages with which the Russian Government was said to be besieging him. As a matter of fact, however, there exists no evidence to show that General Von Kaufmann was in more frequent communication with Shere Ali at this time than formerly, and the correspondence captured at Kabul contains no letter which makes any mention of a *Jehad*, indeed up to the date of Lord Lytton's despatch of May 10th, 1877, none that had not been opened and read in Atta Mahomed's presence, or written with his knowledge, and its contents communicated by him to the Indian Government.² It may be said that all incriminating letters had been destroyed either by Shere Ali himself before his departure

¹ Ibid, No. 1 (1878), page 221.

² Correspondence between Russian authorities and Shere Ali. Central Asia, No. 1 (1881).

from Kabul in December 1878, or by his son Yakub Khan, during the few months of his rule in that city; but this explanation does not tally with the undoubted fact that the Russian Mission of 1878 came upon the Afghan Government as a most unpleasant surprise; and that the subsequent negotiations at Kabul bore no trace of having been led up to by any previous interchange of views. But this point will be fully discussed later on.

A passage in a letter written by Sir William Nott when he was commanding in Kandahar, in 1840, to Sir William Cotton at Jellalabad, seems strikingly applicable to the evidence of the anonymous Kandahari hirer-out of baggage animals, furnished to a Kandahari News-Writer, as to revelations made to the former by an Afghan Chief, since deceased, with regard to certain secret doings of the Amir. "I have no means of obtaining information as to their (the Russians') doings in Central Asia," wrote Nott, "except by conversing with merchants, horse-dealers etc., and *perhaps, not much reliance can be placed on their accounts.*" Yet, it is likely that the Amir did try to ascertain how far he could count upon the religious sympathies of his subjects and his Mahomedan neighbours, in the event of war between himself and the British Government. With British troops established at different points of his frontier; with the soldiers of the Maharajah of Kashmir pressing forward to take up a position from which they, too, could menace Afghan territory; with British demands of an obnoxious character constantly pressed on his acceptance, and supported by threats of evil consequences to himself and his dynasty if he failed to agree to them with alacrity and thankfulness—Shere Ali would have been blind if he had

not recognized the danger hanging over him, and criminally negligent if he had taken no precautions against it.

The real truth of the situation in the winter of 1876—1877 is that both sides were preparing for a possible war; but that the Viceroy was preparing for a war of aggression, and the Amir for a war of defence, and that the aggressive measures had preceded the defensive ones. Many accusations have been brought against Shere Ali—he was dissatisfied; he was sulky; he was unfriendly; he was ambiguous in speech and act; he was blind to his own advantage—but no one has charged him with the folly of meditating an invasion of India. And not only is there not a tittle of evidence to prove that the Amir ever entertained the thought of taking the offensive—but there is good reason to believe that he was under no delusions as to the probable result to himself of even a defensive war, and that he would have welcomed any change in the attitude of the Viceroy which would have justified him in modifying his own. “Your Government,” said Nur Mahomed to Sir Lewis Pelly at the close of the first meeting between the two Plenipotentiaries, “is a powerful and great one; ours is a small and weak one; we have long been on terms of friendship, and the Amir now clings to the skirt of the British Government, and till his hand be cut off, he will not relax his hold of it.”¹ The Kabul Envoy spoke these words “as a private individual and not in an official sense,” nevertheless they may be taken as expressing the true state of his master’s mind at the time of their utterance.

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 197.

The Viceroy's answer to Nur Mahomed's statement was delivered to the latter on the 15th of March and, on the 16th, he sent his Secretary, Munshi Muhammad Bagir, to Sir Lewis Pelly to reply to the remarks made by the British Plenipotentiary at the last meeting of the Conference (February 19th). But Sir Lewis Pelly refused to listen:—"the Kabul Envoy had been given ample time in which to state his case and he had stated it at length. He had since had nearly four weeks in which to answer his—Pelly's—remarks,¹ and he could not now be permitted to waste further time in discussing them. If, however, in giving a definite answer to the agency question, he should make any relevant remarks, he—Sir Lewis—would receive them with his wonted courtesy.

The Secretary explained that his Chief was too ill to consider the Viceroy's instructions; but Pelly contended that, if the Kabul Envoy were well enough to prepare criticisms on his remarks, he must be well enough to give a plain "Yes" or „No" to the Viceroy's question whether he was prepared to accept the preliminary condition. In vain the Secretary declared that it must be long before the state of Nur Mahomed's health would allow of his studying the Viceroy's letter—Sir Lewis Pelly would accord no consideration to a plea "evidently intended to gain time for a further reference to Kabul," and the Secretary had to withdraw with his message undelivered.²

¹ These remarks had not been taken down by Nur Mahomed's secretary, but, a fortnight later, on Sir L. Pelly's invitation, he came to the latter's house and copied them from the English report of the meeting.

² Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pages 220—221

Nur Mahomed had made his last effort and it had failed. The answer to Sir Lewis Pelly's harsh and unfair strictures on the Amir's conduct, painfully prepared on his sick bed, had been refused a hearing, and there was nothing left for him to do but to prove that his illness was not a mere pretext to gain time—by dying. He passed away on the 26th of March, and the British Plenipotentiary sent deputations of condolence to the Afghan Mission; caused the flags on the fort to be hoisted half-mast high, and sixty guns—one for each year of the dead Prime Minister's life—to be fired over the grave; had himself represented at the funeral, and sent off a special messenger to Kabul to convey to the Amir the tidings of his Envoy's death.

No heavier blow could have befallen Shere Ali at this, the most critical juncture of his life, than the loss of the man on whose statesmanship, diplomatic skill, wide knowledge of affairs and devoted loyalty to himself he had so long been accustomed to rely. An Englishman who knew Nur Mahomed at Ambala, wrote of him "that he had there jealously guarded his master's interests, had given life and character to the negotiations, and had sedulously laboured to give a foundation of permanence to whatever had passed between the two rulers"¹ (Lord Mayo and Shere Ali); and it was in jealously guarding his master's interests and in sedulously labouring to defend the foundations of permanence which he had assisted to lay—that he died. It is possible that, if he had lived, he might have succeeded in

¹ *Ambala Conference*, by S. F. J. Clarke, Special Correspondent of the *Englishman*.

averting the Afghan war; but the possibility is so small that, on the strength of it, one can hardly desire that his life should have been prolonged to witness the overthrow of the Kingdom he had helped to build up; to share the flight, and be present at the death in exile of the prince he had served so well; to see Englishmen overrunning and laying waste the land they had pledged themselves to him to respect and defend. How small that possibility is proved by the events that followed immediately on Nur Mahomed's death. Better informed than Sir Lewis Pelly as to the hopeless condition of his Minister, the Amir had not waited to be apprised of his death to despatch another Envoy to Peshawar, invested, this time, with full powers to accept the fatal preliminary condition; but Lord Lytton, though aware that this new Plenipotentiary was on the way, and that he had authority to yield all that had been declared essential to the commencement of negotiations, instructed Sir Lewis Pelly, on the 30th of March, to break them off on the ground that they had lapsed of themselves for lack of any common ground of agreement, and to leave Peshawar as early as possible "to avoid further entanglement." Should new Afghan Envoys arrive meantime, he was to tell them that his powers had terminated.

With this arbitrary act, ended the Conference of Peshawar—that tragic prologue to a still more tragic drama. ¹

¹ According to Lord Roberts ("Forty-one Years in India," Vol. 2, pp. 98—99), "On learning the death of his most trusted Minister, and the failure of the negotiations, Shere Ali broke into a violent fit of passion, giving vent to his fury in threaten-

ings and invectives against the British Government. He declared it was not possible to come to terms, and that there was nothing left for him but to fight; that he had seven crores of rupees, every one of which he would hurl at the heads of the English, and he ended by giving orders for a *jehad* (religious war) to be proclaimed."

The incident may be a true one, though Lord Roberts gives no authority for his account of it. Shere Ali had good cause to feel that it was impossible to come to terms with a Government which argued away its own engagements, whilst magnifying his; and after staking the continuance of the friendship between itself and him on a demand destructive of all confidence and good will, broke off negotiations with him at the very moment of his yielding to its unwise importunity. That his rage and grief should find vent in threatenings and invectives was the most natural thing in the world, but, as has been seen, there exists no proof that he ever proclaimed a *jehad*.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RUSSIAN MISSION.

It must not be supposed that Lord Lytton's policy during the year covered by the despatch of the 10th of May, 1877, commanded at every point the unanimous concurrence of his Council. Of the six ordinary members originally composing it, three—Sir Henry Norman, Sir Arthur Hobhouse and Sir William Muir—remained faithful to the convictions which they had shared with Lord Northbrook, and it was not until they had been replaced by Sir John Strachey, ¹ Sir E. B. Johnson and Mr. W. Stokes that the unanimity which the despatch would lead us to believe had always existed, was really attained. ²

In June 1876 when the answer to be returned to Shere Ali's letter, virtually declining to receive Sir Lewis Pelly, was under the consideration of the Council, these three members protested strongly against the impolicy of forcing an Embassy upon the Amir, in whom they declined to see an enemy of the British Government's, and whose reasons

¹ At one time, an earnest supporter of Lords Lawrence and Mayo in their endeavours to remove "that jealousy of our intentions which in past years had been so fruitful of mischief," now a convert to Lord Lytton's views.

² Afghanistan, No I (1878), pages 165—167

for deprecating the presence of British Officers in Afghanistan they accepted as genuine and valid; and at the end of the discussions, each of the three embodied his views in a Note. These Notes were submitted to the Viceroy who, in acknowledging them, gave the following assurance —

“In conclusion I have only to say that when we have received the Amir’s reply to my present communication, it will be necessary to report officially to the Secretary of State the steps taken in accordance with the instructions of her Majesty’s Government; and members who may still dissent from the course thus taken, will then have a fitting opportunity of fully and officially recording the grounds of their dissent.”

The necessity recognized in this passage seems quickly to have lost its binding force. The Amir’s reply remained officially unreported, and dissentient Members were thus deprived of the opportunity of bringing their views to the notice of the Home Government. Just before leaving India, however, in October, 1876, Sir William Muir, at the close of the discussions in Council as to the instructions to be given to Sir Lewis Pelly for his guidance in the coming Conference with Nur Mahomed, wrote a second Note, repeating and enforcing the opinions contained in the first, and asked that both might be treated as official Minutes when the subject was eventually reported to the Home Government. The request was not complied with. Lord Lytton refused to accord to the second Note the official footing claimed for it by the retiring Councillor, and returned it, by his own account, to the writer through Sir Henry Norman; though, strange to say, Muir never received it and Norman

denied its ever having been intrusted to him. The first Note, in regard to which Lord Lytton did subsequently admit Sir William Muir's right to have it recognized and treated as an official dissent, seems to have been either lost, or overlooked by the Indian Government; and when its author asked, two years later, that both Notes should be presented to Parliament along with the other papers relating to Afghan affairs, the request was refused by Lord Cranbrook on the ground that they were "unofficial," and Sir William Muir was compelled to publish them himself, in order to establish his freedom from all complicity with a policy which he condemned.

The presence of this strong dissentient element in the Council during the first months of Lord Lytton's term of office, goes far to explain the delay in rendering to the British Government that account of the negotiations with the Amir to which it was constitutionally entitled.¹ Certainly the justification for that delay put forward by the Viceroy, that "there had been nothing of any practical importance to report," whilst he had been engaged in carrying out the Secretary of State's instructions, will be accepted by no one who has carefully followed the progress of his negotiations with the Afghan Government, and recognized, with Sir William Muir, that it "abounded with critical occasions and

¹ The Government of India is bound by law "to correspond" with the Home Government, "from time to time, and constantly and diligently to transmit an exact particular of all advices and intelligences and of all transactions and matters whatsoever" (See 13 Geo. III. C. 63, S. 9.)

alternative openings," on which the judgment of the British Government ought to have been taken. Remembering the tenor of Lord Salisbury's Letter of Instructions, it is not safe to deny that, if officially consulted,¹ he might have confirmed Lord Lytton's action at all points; but had the British Government been aware, in time, of the lengths to which the pressure recommended by the Secretary of State was being carried, it might have enjoined greater caution and forbearance on an over-zealous subordinate. Be this as it may, the fact is clear that the opportunity of modifying the Salisbury-Lytton policy was withheld from Lord Beaconsfield and his Cabinet, as a whole, till long after its almost certain consequences had become apparent; withheld, indeed, until withdrawal from it had been put out of their power. Even after the Conference had been arbitrarily broken off, there was still a possibility of keeping up some kind of intercourse with the Amir; but when Lord Lytton followed up this action by forbidding Atta Mahomed's return to Kabul, and recalling the other Members of the Agency to India—relations between the two States ceased altogether, and the time and manner of their renewal was left to the chapter of accidents to shape and determine.

No more unwise step than this withdrawal of the Vakil from Kabul could have been taken, if Lord Lytton still entertained any respect for the British Government's "settled

¹ There can be no doubt that Lord Salisbury and Lord Lytton carried on quite as active a demi-official correspondence with regard to Afghan matters in 1876 and 1877, as the Duke of Argyll and Lord Mayo in 1869.

policy" towards Afghanistan, or cherished any hope of using that country as a buffer between the dominions of the Empress of India and those of the Czar; but the Viceroy's mind was engrossed by schemes quite incompatible with the cautious conduct and moderate aims of his predecessors, and to him it appeared a clever thing first to free the British Government from all Afghan "entanglements" by dropping the Peshawar negotiations, and next to avoid the danger of inopportune overtures on the Amir's part, by depriving him of the channel through which he had so long been accustomed to approach the Indian Government. Friendly intercourse with the prince who ruled over Herat and Kandahar, was a thing to be eschewed by the man whose ambition it was to add those provinces to the Indian Empire, and who was well known to be busy in drawing up a plan for their conquest and permanent occupation,—a plan that he was only withheld from putting into immediate execution by the restraining hand of the Home Government, which had strong reasons, in the then state of Europe, for deprecating any attempt to involve it in hostilities in Asia. ¹

¹ Proof that news of this projected movement on Kandahar and Herat had reached the Amir is contained in a letter from the Meshid agent, dated July 28th, 1877, (Central Asia, No. 1 (1878), p. 120) in which it is reported that British troops were about to advance on Kandahar; that the Governorship of that city had been conferred by the Amir on Afzul Khan, the maternal grandfather of the Heir Apparent, who had been directed to build cantonments in Pishany (Pishin), and had summoned, 1,000 horsemen from Farah (midway between Kandahar and Herat); and that twelve regiments from Kabul and four from Herat had been ordered to proceed to Kandahar.

As far back as the summer of 1875, the Turkish Question was occupying the attention of the Great Powers. One by one, the Christian provinces of Turkey were being driven into rebellion by hopeless misgovernment, and in Herzegovina the insurrectionary movement had assumed a very serious aspect.

On the 30th November, 1875, a Note was drawn up by the Austrian Minister, Count Andrassy, which declared in the name of Austria, Germany and Russia, that the promises of reform made by the Turkish Government had not been fulfilled, and that it had become necessary for the Powers of Europe to combine to insist on the Porte's giving effect to the many engagements which, hitherto, it had persistently disregarded. France and Italy joined in the Note, but England held aloof till pressed by Turkey herself to sign it.

The Note was sent to the Turkish Government which answered it with ready promises of redress and amendment, and continued as before to do nothing. On the invitation of Russia, the Prime Ministers of the three Empires met at Berlin, and drew up a Memorandum of the measures by which Turkey was to be coerced into giving effect to her broken engagements. The British Government refused to support it, and it was never presented. An insurrection in Bulgaria followed, frightful atrocities being committed by the troops sent to repress it. Excited by the accounts sent to the *Daily News* by that paper's Bulgarian correspondent, and by the fiery eloquence of Mr. Gladstone, who emerged from retirement to denounce the weak and barbarous Government which sanctioned, or could not hinder, such barbarities—public opinion in England was so deeply stirred that it

became difficult for the Ministry to continue in its pro-Turkish policy. In the month of June 1876, Servia and Montenegro came to the assistance of their oppressed fellow-Christians; and when, as was to be expected, they proved no match for their antagonist, Russia intervened, and an armistice was concluded, which it was hoped might be utilized to bring about such complete concord among the Great Powers as must overcome even Turkey's ingrained obstinacy and supineness.

A conference, proposed by Lord Derby, met at Constantinople; but the Porte first gained time by professing its willingness to make all necessary reforms itself—for which purpose it went through the farce of summoning a National Parliament—and finally, when further delay was impossible, refused to submit to the terms which Europe sought to impose on it. Then, at last, Russia's patience gave way. On the 24th of April, 1877, she declared war against Turkey; and in June she marched one army towards the Balkans and another into Asia Minor. The Turks, beaten in the first instance, turned to bay at Plevna, and for some months the issue of the war was uncertain; but in November, Kars was taken by assault; in December, Plevna surrendered, and the victorious Russian armies marched towards Constantinople.

Thoroughly alarmed, Mr. Disraeli summoned Parliament together a fortnight earlier than usual, and announced to it, in the speech from the Throne, that the Queen could not conceal from herself that, should the hostilities between Russia and Turkey be prolonged, some unexpected occurrence might render it incumbent on her to adopt measures of precaution.

What the Ministry meant by measures of precaution soon became apparent. A vote of six millions sterling for military and naval expenses was called for and granted by the House of Commons, and the Mediterranean fleet ordered to Constantinople. A little later Indian troops were brought to Malta, the Reserves called out, and Cyprus occupied with Turkey's consent.

It is easy to see the connection between the fluctuations of the Disraeli Administration's policy towards Afghanistan and the various stages of the situation which has just been described. Even as early as January, 1875, when Lord Salisbury wrote to Lord Northbrook instructing him to take measures to procure the Amir's assent to the establishment of a British Agency at Herat, he must have foreseen that the Eastern Question was on the point of becoming once more a menace to the peace of Europe. His second communication on the same subject, in which he over-rode, or ignored the Indian Government's objections to his scheme and insisted on the immediate despatch of a Mission to Kabul, was written after the Herzegovina insurrection had assumed such serious proportions that Austria, Germany and Russia were taking counsel together as to the best way to coerce Turkey into better behaviour towards her unfortunate subjects—consultations which the British Government was watching with suspicion and distrust. The Instructions to Lord Lytton were drawn up a month after the presentation of the Andrassy Note, when it had already become apparent that Turkey's new promises would be no better observed than her old ones, and that stringent measures would have to be adopted to bring her to a less refractory frame of mind. Lord Lytton's

interview with Atta Mahomed, in which his determination to force on the Amir a treaty securing to England vastly increased influence in Afghanistan, was enforced by threats that betrayed the alarm and agitation of his mind—took place six days after Russia had proposed to the other guaranteeing Powers joint action in compelling the Porte to agree to an armistice with Servia and Montenegro, and when the negotiations as to the duration of that armistice were throwing the divergent views and aims of the British and Russian Governments into strong relief. The Conference of Peshawar began ten days after the termination of the futile Conference of Constantinople; ran its course whilst the British Foreign Office was making its last efforts to obtain from Turkey such concessions as should deprive the Czar of all excuse for drawing the sword; and was abruptly broken off by the Viceroy, on the plea of keeping the British Government free from entanglements, when it had begun to be clear that those efforts would prove unavailing. Finally, Lord Lytton's scheme for a march on Herat coincided with the successes achieved by Russia in the first stage of her war with Turkey, and its abandonment, with the reverses sustained by her in its second stage, reverses which Lord Beaconsfield and his colleagues hoped might prove decisive. With the surrender of Plevna this hope vanished, and the British Government took steps which, as we have seen, brought England and Russia to the very verge of war.

So far, though the coming and going of emissaries bearing letters from Kaufmann to the Amir had kept Lord Lytton, and, in a minor degree, the Beaconsfield Ministry in a state

of nervous alarm, and the movements ¹ of British officers on the Perso-Turkoman frontier, ² and the passage through India of a Turkish Mission to Kabul ³ had called forth remon-

¹ Central Asia, No. 1 (1878), pp. 86—110.

² Between 1874 and 1877 there were three such officers, viz., Captain the Hon. G. Napier, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles MacGregor and Captain F. N. Butler. The first, after spending a month in Meshid negotiating vainly with the Persian authorities about a recent Persian raid upon Herat, made his way to Kelat-i-Nadiri on the Perso-Turkoman frontier, and thence along the border to Astrabad close to the Caspian. The second explored the Persian Province of Khorassan, bordering on Afghan and Turkoman territory, but was withheld from penetrating into either by the prohibition of the Indian Government. The third was twice on the Perso-Turkoman frontier: the first time as a mere traveller; the second time sent, according to Lord Lytton, to ascertain the state of things in Merv—according to Butler himself, to lead the Turkomans against the Russians in the event of a conflict between England and Asia in the East. Whatever his object, his presence on the north-east Persian border was very unwelcome to the Russians; and Marvin, in his "Reconnoitring in Central Asia," gives it as his opinion that, if Napier, MacGregor, Butler and their forerunner, Valentine Baker, had never appeared there, Russia would have been spared a whole series of Turkoman campaigns which cost her millions of money and hundreds of lives.

³ An interesting account of this Mission is given by Mr. Grattan Geary, Editor of the *Times of India*, in his volume of travels entitled "Through Asiatic Turkey" (pp. 320—27). The Envoy at the head of it, tried hard to persuade the Amir that he had nothing to fear from England who had "long laid aside the system of annexing Native States," but much from Russia, "the enemy of all Mahomedan States."

The Amir's answer was perfectly consistent with the whole of

strances from the Russian Government; ¹ though Shere Ali was suspected by the one side, of disloyal leanings towards a Russian alliance, and by the other, of unneighbourly intentions with regard to peoples under Russian influence: ²—notwithstanding all this friction, all these recriminations, nothing had actually been done in contravention of the under-

his conduct towards the two “iron pots.” He was in no way hostile to England, in no way inclined to favour Russia; but both Powers were pressing upon him, and he could not be caught unprepared. He must guard against possible attack from the former who, from Quetta, was now looking in at Kandahar; and he must acquaint himself with the movements and aims of the latter, whose frontier now nearly touched his own.

The Turkish Envoy, evidently well instructed by the Indian Government, pointed out that his refusal to receive a British Mission had given rise to the impression that his sympathies were no longer on the side of England. To this, Shere Ali replied that he personally had no objection to Englishmen in Kabul; but his subjects felt differently, and if one of them killed a British officer he should be held responsible, and it was better therefore not to run the risk. The Envoy next broached the subject of an alliance between Afghanistan and Turkey against Russia, and tried to induce the Amir to pose as the champion of Mahomedanism in Central Asia—but the Afghan ruler remained provokingly clear-sighted and cool-headed. He was too far from Turkey to give her aid in the field; she, too far from him to come to his assistance; and Afghanistan, too weak to cope, single-handed, with Russia. If England were Turkey’s friend, why did she not help her? She had plenty of troops and many ships by means of which she could move them wherever she liked.

¹ Central Asia, No. I (1878), pp. 121—22.

² Ibid, pp. 90—94.

standing which, since 1873, had governed the Asiatic relations of the two great rival States.

Now, however, Russia took up the gauntlet thrown down to her in the passage of the Dardanelles by a British fleet, and the introduction of Indian troops into Europe; and the order was given to mobilize an army in Russian Turkestan, and to despatch a Russian Mission to Kabul.

The reports of Russia's warlike preparations in Central Asia spread rapidly through Afghanistan, growing as they spread, till, by the time they reached Peshawar, the army about to be thrown across the Oxus had swelled, according to one account, to thirty thousand,¹ according to another, to eighty thousand men.² In reality it consisted of fifteen thousand four hundred men, divided into three columns:—one, seventeen hundred strong, at Petro Alexandrovsk; another, twelve thousand strong, at Tashkent; and a third, also numbering seventeen hundred men, at Margelan in Ferghana.³

The columns, all well equipped and well organized, were eventually to act in concert, and, for this end, were to concentrate on the Oxus, or to converge on some convenient point in Afghan Turkestan; but in the meanwhile a special task was assigned to each. The right column was to seize the ferry at Charjui, hold the Merv Turcomans in check, and open out a road on the right bank of the Oxus; the centre was to overawe the tribes inhabiting the regions between the Oxus and the Hindu Kush; whilst the left column

¹ Afghanistan, No I (1878), p. 227.

² Central Asia, No. I (1878), p. 139.

³ Ibid., p. 133.

was to establish Russian rule over the tribes occupying the upper course of that river.

The troops composing the main body left Tashkent in two divisions, early in June, and after a toilsome march of two hundred miles, in the course of which they had to cross two broad and rapid rivers, the Sir Daria and the Zarafshan,¹ and to traverse two waterless Steppes, exposed to the rays of the midsummer sun, fanned by the fiery blast of the desert and suffocated by clouds of hot dust—they reached Jam, a town on the frontier of Bokhara, one hundred miles north of the Oxus. Here they halted for a month, awaiting further orders; suffering, in enforced repose, the same torments from sun, wind and dust as on the march; with the natural result that their ranks were decimated by dysentery, typhus, fever and sun-stroke.²

The right and left columns moved at the same time as the main body, and the former, at least, encountered the same difficulties; its march to Charjui lying across a trackless

¹ In a letter to the *Souremeni Izvesti* of October $\frac{10}{21}$, 1878, a correspondent in describing the passage of the rivers Sir Darya and Zarafshan by the main Russian column, states that the former river "is very wide, and the current is so swift that the rafts were carried down the stream for a distance of three versts"; the latter "flows with a terrible rapidity, and sets large stones lying at the bottom of its bed into motion . . . when it overflows (which was the case during our passage across), the width of the river would be about 3 versts, and it then forms several arms. Several carts were lost, and their contents carried away during our passage."

² Central Asia, No 2 (1878), pages 16—17.

desert, swept by violent gusts of hot wind, which enveloped the troops in clouds of dust, whilst the feet of the men, the hoofs of the horses and the wheels of the gun carriages sank, at every step, deep into the friable sand.¹

The Russian Mission consisting of General Stolietoff and of six other officers, escorted by twenty-two Cossacks, had left Tashkent before the troops began to advance; but by the time General Von Kaufmann's letter announcing its despatch reached Shere Ali, each of the three columns was well on its way, and rumour, as we have seen, had carried exaggerated accounts of their strength to Kabul.

Ever since it had become apparent that the Russo-Turkish difficulty might end in a war between Great Britain and Russia, the Amir had been subjected to great pressure from his own relatives and friends to induce him to choose definitely between the rival Powers. But a definite choice was the very thing that he desired to avoid. He was as unwilling to subordinate Afghan interests, which he held to be bound up with Afghan independence, to the ambitions of Russia as to the fears of Great Britain; and though he laid the advice tendered to him by Sikandar Khan and Sirdar Afzal Khan before his Durbar, and talked of consulting the whole body of Afghan Grandees, he never wavered in the belief that his true policy was to bind himself to neither neighbour.

If the reports which reached the Indian Government from several quarters may be trusted, home pressure was not the only kind brought to bear on Shere Ali at this time. Since

¹ Central Asia, No. 2 (1878), pages 16—17.

the end of 1877 two Russian Native Envoys had visited Kabul, both of whom are credited with having striven to win him over to the Russian side. A confidential Newsletter from the Government Agent at Peshawar, dated June 18th, 1878, professed to give the exact terms¹ laid by the

¹ "1. That the Amir may permit the location of Russian Agents at Kabul and at other places in his territory where it may be deemed necessary to locate such Agents . . .

"2. That permission be accorded for the quartering of Russian troops at four suitable places on the boundaries of Afghanistan, and that the Amir should engage to protect those troops.

"3. That the Russian Government be allowed to construct a road from Samarkand to Kabul . . . then from Kabul to Herat . . . and from Herat to Kandahar.

"4. When necessity arises, the Kabul Government may allow passage, by routes it may be desirable to follow, to Russian troops proceeding to India.

"5. That telegraph wire be set up between Samarkand, Kabul, Kandahar and other places where Russian troops, or Agents be stationed.

"6. That when necessary, Russian troops may be supplied with provisions and carriage on payment of reasonable prices.

"7. The Russian Government will allow the continuance of Afghanistan to the representatives, successors and heirs of the Amir in perpetuity, in accordance with the will (of the last sovereign) and legal rights.

"8. That the Russian Government will in no way interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and the administration of the country.

"9. That the Russian Government will ever afford proper aid for the maintenance of peace in Afghanistan, and to (assistance against?) the external and internal enemies of the Principality.

"10. The Russian authorities will consider the enemies of the Amir as their enemies.

"11. That if it becomes desirable that the Russian Government should send an expedition to wage war in India, the

second of these Envoys before Shere Ali; but none of the reports so sedulously collected by the Government Agent at Peshawar contains any hint that these proposals, if made, were favourably received by the Amir, whilst they furnish ample proof that he was alarmed by the movement of Russian troops towards his frontier, and angry when he heard of the despatch of the Russian Mission;¹ and though, in the end, he withdrew his opposition to its journey, he certainly connived at, if he did not directly order, the measures by which his officers in Turkestan sought to delay its advance.

Delay was obviously of incalculable value to Shere Ali at a time when the course of events in Europe—the connection between which and the Mission he fully understood—might at any moment assume an aspect which would relieve him from the hard necessity of choosing whether to risk the swift destruction of his independent authority by appealing to arms, or to acquiesce in its slow extinction by the gradual spread of Russian, or British influence within his dominions. He was well aware that that change in the relations between Great Britain and Russia, which he had foreseen as a possibility in 1873, had actually occurred. Still war had not yet broken out between the two Empires; it might even be averted; in which case Russia would, probably, withdraw her pretensions to interfere with him, or his territories, and Great Britain herself, relieved from the

Amir should furnish supplies to the Russian troops on payment; and that the Afghan Government will establish Agents at the capital of Russia, at Tashkent, etc.”—*Iude Central Asia*, No. 1 (1878), page 159.

¹ *Central Asia*, No. 1 (1878), pages 137—138.

pressing anxiety which had inspired Lord Lytton's feverish efforts to reduce Afghanistan to a state of virtual dependence upon the British Government, might revert to her former policy of non-intervention, tempered by friendly counsel and friendly support. The Amir's hopes were to be fulfilled in the end, but too late for him to profit by their fulfilment.

Whilst General Stolietoff and his companions were journeying slowly towards Kabul, a Congress was sitting at Berlin; and before the Mission had crossed the Hindu Kush, a treaty had been signed by the Great Powers which put an end to the fear of a renewal of the Russo-Turkish struggle on a wider scale. On the 13th of July the maintenance of peace between England and Russia was assured; but news travelled slowly through the wild regions of Central Asia, and the Mission moved on, not knowing that the causes to which it owed its existence had passed away.

In obedience to the Amir's orders, the Shahgassie Sherdil Khan had sent a messenger to meet General Stolietoff at Shinabad in Bokhara, with the request that he would remain there till there had been time to arrange for his suitable reception; and when this attempt to postpone the Mission's entry into Afghanistan failed, it was kept waiting three days on the left bank of the Oxus for the guard that was to escort it to Kabul. The opportune death of the Governor of Marzar-i-Sherif furnished an excuse for detaining the Mission in that city; and when, on the appointment of his successor, it was permitted to proceed, solicitude for the safety and comfort of the travellers so reduced the length of each day's journey, that it was the 22nd of July before they entered Kabul, mounted on elephants which had been

sent out to meet them, and attended by several of the Afghan Ministers, the Commander-in-Chief and one of the Afghan Princes.

Pride and policy combined to inspire the royal welcome accorded by the Amir to his unbidden guests, and the same motives prompted him to display, to the utmost, his military power in the Review which was held in their honour on the 2nd of August; but these marks of courtesy towards themselves, and of respect for their Government must not be taken as proofs that he had come to favour the objects they had been sent to further. Certainly the jealous care with which he kept them shut up in the Residency in the Bala Hissar, closely guarded, secluded from all visitors save those who came by his command, and never allowed to show themselves in the streets of the city—bears testimony to the embarrassment which their presence occasioned him, an embarrassment due, in part, to his anxiety for their personal safety, and, in part, to his fear lest, whilst openly negotiating with him, they might secretly intrigue with his ministers and chiefs.^{1 2}

At the reception Durbar held on the 26th July, General Stolietoff merely presented General Von Kaufmann's letter commending him to the Amir as a man high in the Emperor's favour and in his own confidence, leaving the serious

¹ Central Asia, No. 2 (1878), page 6.

² A Shahgassie, cousin to the Amir, who accompanied Mr. G. B. Scott when he was surveying a portion of the Khujiani country in 1879—told him that, except the Doctor, not a single officer of the Mission was ever permitted to go through the city. The Doctor occasionally went out in a covered palankin, escorted by a strong body of cavalry.

business of the Mission to be discussed in more private interviews with the Amir, or his Ministers. ¹

In the absence of all official documents referring to the Mission, we have only the rumours current in Kabul at the time, as reported to Cavagnari by his secret agents in Afghanistan, to go by for the details of the secret designs which Stolietoff was empowered to communicate to the Amir; but whether they did, or did not, include the right to survey the country between the Oxus and Kabul, to establish supply depôts on various points of the Afghan frontier, to construct roads, and telegraph lines and to move troops freely within Afghan territory—is of little consequence, since there can be no doubt that the Mission was sent for the purpose of ascertaining the military resources of Afghanistan, and of persuading, or frightening, the Amir into placing those resources at Russia's disposal, in the event of war's breaking out between her and Great Britain; and these, or similar measures, would have been the natural outcome of such a radical surrender to Russian influence.

What *is* of consequence, however, are the indications as to the spirit in which the Russian overtures were received by the Amir which these reports furnish. According to one anonymous statement, the Afghan Ministers were generally of opinion that the Amir would not enter into any engagement with Russia, which would sanction her interference in

¹ It was currently rumoured at the time that Stolietoff was also the bearer of an autograph letter from the Czar; but the Russian Government subsequently denied the existence of any such letter, and it seems not to have been found at Kabul.

his country. Another nameless informant told Cavagnari it was the impression in Kabul that the Amir had not concluded any arrangement with the Russian Envoy, and that he was trying to gain time with a view to watching what action the British Government would take. Several accounts mention that the Amir spoke with bitterness of the conduct of that Government towards him;¹ but none of them hints that he showed himself inclined to yield to a new friend what he had refused to an old ally; and, in addition to this negative evidence to the consistency of his conduct, we have the positive testimony of Prince Lobanoff, the Russian Ambassador in London, who told Lord Granville in 1881 that all the correspondence relating to Afghanistan in the possession of the Russian Government went to prove that Shere Ali was neither Russian nor English, but an Afghan desirous of preserving the independence of his country.²

Yet many causes were at work to sap Shere Ali's spirit of patriotic independence; chief among them, his uncertainty as to the attitude that Great Britain might take up as a set-off to the rebuff she would conceive she had suffered in the reception of a Russian Mission at Kabul, and the knowledge that the Russians held in their hands a master card in the person of his exiled nephew, Abdur Rahman, who, at that time, was universally believed to be ready to accept the Afghan throne on any terms which Russia might care to dictate.³

¹ Central Asia, No. 2 (1878), pages 2, 6, 7, 9.

² Ibid., No. 1 (1881), page 29.

³ Central Asia, No. 1 (1878), page 137.

Then there was the pressure exercised on him by the movements of the Russian troops towards his frontiers; by the activity with which road making was being carried on in Russian Turkestan; and the surreptitious surveying of his own territories by the men whom the Mission had left behind at different points of its advance, ostensibly to carry despatches; and to these grounds for uneasiness must he added a rebellion of the Kandahari Ghilzais, some of whom were said to have gone to Quetta to prefer complaints against him and to solicit British interference,¹ and last, but not least, the illness and death of his appointed heir, the young Abdulla Jan, out of love for whom he had so alienated his two elder sons, Yakub and Ayub Khan, that, for his own safety's sake, he had been compelled to make a prisoner of the one and an exile of the other. That, under so great a burden of public anxiety and private grief, he still opposed a firm front to the Russian demands, and forebore to lend himself to their plans for weakening and embarrassing the Government of whose conduct towards himself he had good reason to complain—gave him a fresh claim on British consideration and entitled him to very different treatment than he was fated to receive.

It would be a mistake, however, to exaggerate the pressure to which he was subjected by the direct action of the Russian Envoy. General Stolietoff's own position was one which called for great reserve and caution. The news of the conclusion of the Treaty of Berlin must have reached Kabul before him, or very soon after, and he would hesitate to take

¹ Ibid., No. 2 (1878), pages 7 and 9.

any steps which might jeopardise the newly re-established friendly relations between Russia and Great Britain. It would therefore become his aim, whilst allowing the Amir to perceive the true objects of the Mission, and trying to impress him with the belief that behind any demands that he—Stolietoff—might prefer, lay the power and the will to enforce them—to avoid pressing them on his immediate acceptance; and to give gradually such a turn to the negotiations that, if their results should ever be published to the world, they would be found to contain nothing that it would not be difficult to justify or, if need be, to surrender; and he certainly managed matters with such skill that, in the end, he not only made the Amir appear in the light of a suppliant seeking favours at Russia's hands, instead of in his true character of a proud and jealous prince conceding unwillingly the least that he could hope the Russian Government would accept, but actually took away unsigned the treaty which he had come so far to conclude.

The terms of this draft treaty,¹ which are known to us in two versions, furnished from memory by Afghan officials to General Roberts in 1879, are modelled on those which, at different times, had been offered to Shere Ali by Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook, or which he had sought to obtain from those Viceroys. On the part of the Russian Government, there was offered recognition of his appointed heir, and promises to protect all Afghan merchants trading in Russian territory; to treat with consideration any of his servants whom he might send to Russia to learn arts and

¹ Central Asia, No. 1 (1881), pages 17 and 19.

trades; and to assist him, with advice or otherwise, at its discretion, to repel invasion, on his undertaking not to wage war with any foreign power without its consent. On the Amir's part, there was the acceptance of engagements to report to the Russian authorities in Central Asia, in a friendly manner, all that went on in his Kingdom, and to communicate his wishes to General Von Kaufmann, who was to be authorized to fulfil them.

The messenger who carried to General Stolietoff the first authoritative intimation of the signature of the Berlin treaty, brought him, at the same time, so imperative an order to return to his own country, that, leaving Colonel Rosgonoff in charge of the Mission, he quitted Kabul on the 24th of August and reached Tashkent on the 16th of September, thus accomplishing in twenty-three days, the distance which it had taken him two months to traverse on his outward journey. From that city he wrote to the Amir that he was trying, night and day, to gain their objects and hoped to be successful. "I am starting," so the letter went on, "to see the Emperor to-day, in order to inform his Majesty personally of our affairs. If God pleases, everything that is necessary will be done and affirmed. I hope that those who want to enter the gate of Kabul from the east will see that the door is closed; then, please God, they will tremble." ¹

These words can hardly refer to the draft treaty, the rejection of which would certainly have occasioned Shere Ali neither annoyance, nor alarm. The privilege of sending a few of his subjects to learn the arts and trades of Europe,

¹ Central Asia, No. 1 (1881), page 18.

he had rejected when offered to him by Lord Mayo at Ambala; nor is it likely that he would feel himself repaid for the surrender of any part of his political independence, by the Russian Government's promise to assist him, at its discretion, by advice or otherwise, to repel a foreign foe. And yet it was to this letter that Prince Lobanoff appealed three years later, when he and Lord Granville were fencing over Russia's Afghan policy at the period now under review, as a proof that Stolietoff had not tried to get a plan of his own Government's adopted, but to further the Amir's views. What then were the affairs in which Stolietoff was busy day and night? The explanation most in harmony with all the circumstances of the time, is that Shere Ali, perceiving that Russia and England were about to revert to their former relative positions with regard to himself, and having already received an intimation that a British Mission was about to visit his capital—requested Stolietoff to use his influence to obtain from the Emperor Alexander a promise to act as his protector, or, at least, as his intercessor, in case his reluctant acquiescence in the unsolicited visit of the Russian Mission should have drawn down upon him the resentment of the British Government.

Such a claim he must have felt himself justified in urging without offering any corresponding sacrifice of his own authority, or dignity; and such a claim common humanity, and, perhaps, some feeling of personal sympathy for the prince whose embarrassments he had helped to create, would bind General Stolietoff to support to the utmost of his power.

CHAPTER IX

THE BRITISH MISSION AND THE VICEROY'S MINUTE.

THE note of haste and anxiety which vibrated through the Letter of Instructions to Lord Lytton and the despatches to Lord Northbrook of the 22nd January and the 19th November, 1875, is not to be detected in the Letter of the 4th of October, 1877,¹ in which Lord Salisbury acknowledged Lord Lytton's despatch of the 10th of May. He had come to see that "foreign"—*i.e.* Russian—"aggression" on Afghanistan "might not be, and probably was not, imminent":—in other words, he had abandoned the alarmist stand-point of Sir Bartle Frere, and could, in consequence, afford to treat the Amir with what, to him, must have appeared generous patience and forbearance. The tone of the latter half of this despatch of the 4th October, though marred by a lack of that gift of sympathetic imagination without which it was impossible for him to judge Shere Ali fairly, is honourable to the writer, as proving that his new Afghan policy had been inspired by no vulgar greed of territory, but by genuine uneasiness as to the consequences to India of leaving Afghanistan to take her own measures of defence against Russian aggression. That uneasiness removed,

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pages 222—224.

the desire to impose upon the Amir, by force, what Lord Salisbury still believed to be his better plans for assuring the independence of Afghanistan, disappeared with it; and this change of view found expression in the injunction laid upon the Viceroy to abstain for the present, on the one hand, from any hostile pressure on that prince, and, on the other, from any renewed offer of concessions which had been refused.

It is easy to see how severe a blow the first half of this prohibition struck at Lord Lytton's ambitious schemes; what a stumbling-block it put in the way of the measures by which he was clearing the ground for hostile action at some not distant date. His border policy having been framed to exercise the pressure which he was now forbidden to employ, practically collapsed; and, in his disappointment, he must have been glad of the opportunity to utilize some of his coercive preparations, which was afforded him by the opposition of the Jowakis to the new road that he had ordered to be made through the Kohat Pass. The practical bearings of this little war on the greater war which was to succeed it, will be seen later on: here it need only be mentioned that it lasted into March, 1878, and consequently had not long been brought to an end before the first rumours of the movement of Russian troops in Central Asia, and of the despatch of a Russian Mission to Kabul, revived Lord Lytton's hopes of being allowed a free hand in his dealings with the Amir.

On the 7th of June the Viceroy telegraphed to the new Secretary of State for India, Lord Cranbrook, the report that Kaufmann had apprised Shere Ali of the approaching visit of a Russian Envoy. Other telegrams followed in quick

succession,¹ giving the different forms which the rumours concerning the Russian Mission, from time to time, assumed; seeking for definite indications of the views of the Cabinet as regarded Russia's conduct in sending, and the Amir's conduct in receiving that Mission; asking for permission to insist upon the immediate reception of a British Envoy; and hinting that the whole business had better be left to the Indian Government to settle. Lord Cranbrook was in less haste to push matters to extremities than Lord Lytton. Not till the 1st of August did he take notice of the latter's pressing messages, and, then, only to telegraph that, before insisting on the reception of a British Envoy at Kabul, steps should be taken to make sure that a Russian Envoy had actually arrived there. Two days later, however, when this fact had been placed beyond dispute, he gave the desired permission, coupled with a request to be informed by what steps the Viceroy proposed to coerce the Amir, in case he should refuse the demand to be made upon him. Lord Lytton was not prepared with an answer to this pertinent question; but he gave an assurance that no action should be taken without full previous communication with the Home Government,² and then addressed himself to the task of selecting the members of the proposed Mission. His choice fell upon the Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army, Sir Neville Chamberlain, G.C.B., G.C.S.I., who was to be accompanied, for political duties, by Major P. L. N. Cavagnari, C.S.I., and Major O. B. O. St. John, R.E.; by

¹ *Afghanistan*, No. 1 (1878), pages 226—229.

² *Ibid.*, No. 1 (1878), pages 228—229.

Captain St. V. A. Hammick as Military Secretary ; by Captain F. M. Onslow and Lieutenant N. F. F. Chamberlain as aides-de-camp ; and by an escort of two hundred and fifty sabres under Captain A. H. Prinsep. These officers were to start for Kabul very early in September, and, meantime, a native emissary was to be sent in advance to deliver to the Amir a letter from the Viceroy, conveying a notification of Sir Neville Chamberlain's approach, and requiring him—Shere Ali—to make the necessary arrangements for the Envoy's safe passage through Afghan territory ;—the Native gentleman selected for this delicate office, being the Nawab Gholam Hussein Khan, C.S.I., Atta Mahomed's predecessor at Kabul, whence Lord Lawrence had recalled him, in 1864, for abusing his position by intriguing with Azim Khan against Shere Ali himself.

Before this ill-chosen messenger could leave Peshawar, the news of the death of the Afghan Heir Apparent had been received in India, and Lord Lytton sent down from Simla, in haste, a second letter, this time of condolence, in which the Amir was assured that the British Mission should postpone its departure from India, in order that his Highness might not be troubled by any public business, however important and urgent, until the usual period of mourning—forty days—should have expired.¹ The assurance was a kindly one, and, if carried out in the spirit as well as the letter, might have gone far to reassure the Amir, and dispose him to acquiesce in the visit of the Mission ; but, unfortunately, Lord Lytton put the narrowest interpretation upon the

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pages 232—234.

concession which courtesy and humanity had wrung from him ; for, whilst directing Sir N. Chamberlain to remain, for the present, at Peshawar, he sent orders to Gholam Hussein to hurry his journey, in order that no time might be lost in convincing Shere Ali that he must look for the entry of the British Mission into his capital at an early date, and authorized Cavagnari to enter into negotiations with the Khyber tribes—a step little calculated to promote the Amir's peace of mind.

Whilst the Native Envoy was travelling towards Kabul, and Sir Neville Chamberlain and his companions were waiting at Peshawar—the Viceroy was engaged in drawing up the instructions by which his Envoy was to be guided, and in the preparation of a long and elaborate minute,¹ intended to explain to the members of his Council the situation, of which the appointment of a British Mission to Kabul was the latest development; the objects to which the Envoy was to seek to gain the Amir's assent; and the alternative policy which he, Lord Lytton, had in contemplation should that assent be withheld.

The Instructions directed Sir Neville Chamberlain to hold himself in readiness to start as early as possible after the 16th September; warned him that “political exigencies” might make it necessary for him to cross the frontier before any formal reply to the Viceroy's letter could be received from the Amir; and bade him push on as quickly as possible, even in the teeth of attempts made by the local officers upon the road to delay, or dispute his passage. Only in case “of arms being used, or any hostile demonstration made in earnest by

¹ Afghanistan, No 2 (1881), pages 4—24.

persons responsible to the Kabul Government," was he to return to British territory. Arrived in Kabul, he would of course, be received by the Amir in public Durbar; and he was to take this opportunity of declaring that his Mission was of a friendly character, and its object, to clear up the misunderstandings which had arisen since the Conference of Ambala. In less formal interviews, he was to state openly that the immediate cause of his deputation to Kabul was the affront offered to Great Britain by the reception of a Russian Mission; which unfriendly act, and the whole course of recent events in Central Asia, had so affected the political situation as to make it necessary for the British Government to ascertain what interpretation was to be put upon the new aspect of affairs, and what, thenceforward, were to be its relations with Afghanistan.

If the Envoy found Shere Ali disinclined to explain, or if he discovered from other sources that he was already pledged to a policy adverse to British interests—he was to adopt towards him and his Ministers a tone of grave warning; but if convinced that the Amir had views and engagements incompatible with the renewal of satisfactory relations with the British Government—he was to consider his mission at an end and return to India; and the test of the Amir's real disposition and intention was to be his agreement, or refusal to require the Russian Agency, if still in Kabul, to quit his dominions. If, on the other hand, the Amir seemed to desire a reconciliation with the British Government—he was to be assured that he could secure its friendship by dismissing the Russian Mission; engaging to accept British control over the external relations of Afghanistan, to the

exclusion of the political action, or influence of Russia; and by permitting the residence within his dominions of English officers, as a guarantee against future misunderstandings between the two Governments, and as an unmistakable manifestation of his alliance with Great Britain.

Sir Neville Chamberlain was not to insist upon the admission of a British Representative at Kabul, because "previous discussions had elicited expressions of the Amir's particular disinclination to see an English Resident in his capital;" but he was to make it clearly understood that, if the British Government contented itself with the placing of permanent agents at Herat and Balkh, it expected free access to Kabul for special Envoys, whenever it might think it advisable to send one.

In return for these two concessions Sir Neville Chamberlain was authorised to promise the Amir:

1. An annual subsidy not exceeding, for the present, twelve lakhs.

2. The recognition of the heir named by him during his life-time, and the continuance of the subsidy to such heir on his succession to the throne of Kabul.

3. An engagement to join the Amir in defending by force of arms the territories then under his acknowledged jurisdiction, if Russia, or any States under her influence, should attempt to take possession of any part of them.

The two first promises were to be freely offered; the latter to be given if asked for. Minor matters, such as the opening of Afghanistan to the English, and the allowing free transit of commerce through the Khyber, were not to be pressed. If the Amir were to allude to the British occupation of

Quetta, he was to be told that our troops were there in accordance with a treaty of twenty years' standing, and that one object of the proposed Mission to Kabul in 1876 was to explain our intentions with regard to Baluchistan, and to give the Amir satisfactory assurances as to our action in that country; but that now the time for discussing it had passed.

The concessions asked of the Amir in this Letter of Instructions were moderate compared with those which Sir Lewis Pelly had been instructed to wring from his Envoy, and the promises to be made to him, in return, more definite, and less hedged about by saving clauses; but the grounds on which Sir Neville Chamberlain was bidden to demand the admission of British officers to Afghanistan were those, fighting against which Nur Mahomed had died—namely, the attribution of the misunderstandings that had arisen between the British and Afghan Governments, to the lack of a British Resident at Kabul, and the assumption that the Amir's objection to British Agents was practically confined to such Agents in his capital. Had Sir Neville Chamberlain ever reached Kabul, it is probable that Shere Ali would have finally accepted the "essential preliminary", and have done his best to insure the safety of his dreaded guests; nevertheless, it would have been a wiser thing not to rake up the embers of dead controversies, but simply to instruct the British Envoy to present the old unpalatable demand as the expression of the British Government's fixed and unalterable will; the Amir being more likely to yield to a strength which he recognised, than to arguments which he impugned. But Sir Neville Chamberlain never reached Kabul; and the cause of his failure to do so, is to be found

in the injunction laid upon him to force his way thither against all resistance falling short of armed opposition; whilst the origin of that injunction must be sought, not in "political exigencies," which had no existence either in Europe, or in Asia, but in the plans for the ultimate settlement of the North-West Frontier, which were occupying Lord Lytton's mind, and which he explained to his Council in the Minute of the 4th of September.

This extraordinary document reveals the most daring ambition united to the blindest optimism. Whilst writing it, Lord Lytton had, evidently, seen no bounds to the Indian Empire save those which the British Government's moderation might appoint; and if he drew its ultimate frontier line at the Northern side of the Hindu Kush, it was not from any doubt as to the feasibility of carrying it further, but from uncertainty as to whether England would undertake the permanent administration of the whole of Central Asia, and from commiseration for the misfortunes which a merely temporary occupation of its Russian provinces would bring, first, upon our enemies, and then upon our allies. In the Viceroy's opinion, Russia's military position was so weak that, "if England were securely established at Kabul, with the passes of the Hindu Kush in her possession, and outposts at Faizabad, Kunduz, Balkh, and Herat," "the result of a contest between the two Empires on the Oxus could (can) not be doubted;" and this enormous *if* staggered him so little that his only difficulty seems to have lain in resisting the temptation to turn his hypothesis into a reality on the spot. ¹

¹ Lord Lytton, in his Minute, relegated this invasion of Central

On one point we know he did not resist it; for ~~though~~ at the end of the Minute, he explains that he has been looking "a long way ahead," and that he does not deem it desirable to undertake to garrison even Herat "for many years to come"—yet the constitution of the army which began to assemble, only a few weeks later, at Multan, proclaimed its destination to be that city. Nay, so far as it is possible to disentangle Lord Lytton's immediate aims from the suggestions and considerations by which they were overlaid, they seem to have fallen very little short of his widest outlook. If, in one paragraph, he renounces the idea of himself dethroning the prince whom he admits to "have no equal in his kingdom for character and ability," on the express ground that a free competition for the Afghan throne

Asia to some remote period, but there is no doubt that he expected it to come in his own day. "I believe," so wrote, on August 28th, 1878, the Simla correspondent of the Indian Government's organ—*The Pioneer*—"I believe it is no secret that had war broken out (with Russia), we should not have remained on the defensive in India. A force of 30,000 men, having purchased its way through Afghanistan, thrown rapidly into Samarkand and Bokhara, would have had little difficulty in beating the scattered Russian troops back to the Caspian; for coming thus as deliverers, the whole population would have risen in our favour. In the feasibility of such a programme the Russians fully believed." That the Russians were aware of Lord Lytton's schemes, is confirmed by the fact that General Skobeleff sharply interrogated Colonel Brackenbury whom he met on the Shipka Pass, as to what had "become of that column of 10,000 men that had been organized by your people to raise Central Asia against us"—(*Times*, October 5th, 1878); but that they believed "in the feasibility of such a programme" is more than doubtful.

would probably result in Abdur Rahman's establishing himself "in the Trans-Hindu Kush Provinces, as a Russian feudatory," and in Persia's seizing Herat, leaving only Kandahar and Southern Afghanistan to us, till the disturbances and struggles which must be looked for in Kabul should compel us to annex that province also—in another, he unfolds plans which would have had exactly the same disintegrating effect on the Afghan Kingdom; and he more than reconciles himself to the idea of Herat's falling, temporarily, into the hands of Persia, by the reflection that the application of pressure to her sea-board would easily oblige her to resign that city, and that "we could not establish ourselves there under more favourable conditions than those created by a treaty, in which we should appear as its recognised liberators and guardians."

The immediate measures from which such tremendous consequences were to flow were three: (1) "an armed occupation of the Kuram Valley"; (2) "the concentration of a force at Quetta sufficient to threaten Kandahar"; (3) "the opening of direct negotiations with the various semi-independent tribes along the border, with a view to detaching them from the Amir's cause."—In the first of these proposals may be traced the influence of Lumsden and Roberts; in the second, that of Green and Sandeman; in the third that of Cavagnari; whilst Colley's hand can be recognised in the military axioms, taken from the experience of Europe, and applied, without modification, to the widely different conditions presented by Afghanistan; and he, Roberts and Cavagnari may be jointly credited with the prognostications of easy, cheap, and rapid success, that abound in the

Minute, and wherein can be read the profound contempt for a semi-savage foe with which they had imbued their highly-placed pupil. The limitation of the troops to 6,000 in the Kuram and 10,000 at Kandahar, was the practical outcome of this contempt; and to that limitation and to the tardy provision made for the mobilisation of even this insufficient force, must be attributed a large part of the wasteful expenditure that had to be incurred when, at the last moment, the counsels of men of better knowledge and sounder judgment prevailed over the crude theories and baseless expectations of the Viceroy's unofficial advisers.

The Minute protested that no steps at variance with a possible renewal of good relations with Shere Ali were to be taken till Sir Neville Chamberlain's Mission had definitely failed; but, through it, there runs an undercurrent of distrust of that prince, and of preference for some successor to him of weaker stuff, who, rising to power out of a chaos of our creating, and unable to maintain his position against the steady menace of our presence in the Kuram, must needs bow to our demands, and lean submissively on our support. This preference explains the discrepancy between the harshness of the instructions given to Chamberlain with regard to the mode of his advance to Kabul, and the moderation of the terms which he was to offer to the Afghan Government when he got there. Lord Lytton desired to avoid war with Afghanistan; but he was indifferent to a rupture with the reigning Amir, and he firmly believed that there was no necessary connection between the two. He went even further than the belief that it was possible to break with the ruler and keep on good terms with the

people of Afghanistan: he absolutely flattered himself that British troops could occupy Afghan provinces and march through the territory of Independent Tribes, and yet escape being regarded by the inhabitants in the light of invaders and enemies. There seems to have been no room in his forecasts even for those plundering propensities of the hillman, to which the sight of a baggage train, or a handful of stragglers is a temptation not to be resisted; and the explanation of this extraordinary delusion lies in the fact that he omitted Afghanistan from among the factors of the military problem which he had to solve. In his judgment, it was not the 976 miles which separate Peshawar from Tashkent; nor the cruel ruggedness of the narrow Afghan roads; nor the deadly extremes which characterise the Afghan climate; nor the incurable barrenness of Afghanistan's vast mountain chains; nor the small extent of her cultivable soil—which hinder Russian hosts from appearing before the gates of the former city, but the poverty of Central Asia, and the distance between Tashkent and her base in Europe; and he was consequently free to argue that India being, by comparison, a rich country, and England able by her command of the sea to supplement India's resources at will—a British advance to the Oxus was as easy as a Russian counter-movement from Turkestan to the Indus must be difficult.

It is not surprising that a civilian, who had picked up a few military terms without acquiring any real knowledge of the theory and practice of war, should have derived satisfaction from the thought of Peshawar's superiority to Tashkent as a base of supply; but it is astonishing that the military men, from whom he had learned to talk of "bases,"

should not have taught him that an army is none the better for starting from a rich country, if the distance to be traversed is sufficiently long, and the rate of progression sufficiently slow to exhaust its commissariat and transport resources before it reaches its goal—that goal an utterly barren one. Viewed by the light of this stern truth, the barrier which stands between Russian ambition and India is exactly the same as that which stands between British ambition and Russian Turkestan, viz. :—the indomitable spirit of the Afghans, which may be counted on to retard to the utmost the march of any foreign force through their country, and that country's extraordinary sterility and inaccessibility. These two factors dominate the Central Asian Question so completely as to dwarf into insignificance such minor considerations as the greater, or less degree of ease with which supply and transport can be originally collected, or the personal predilections of an Afghan ruler; and they may be trusted to keep the two Empires apart, even if some future Amir should be so untrue to the traditions of his race as to be willing to subserve the schemes of either. Yet Lord Lytton took no count of the one, and did worse than ignore the other; for that he saw in Afghanistan a source of supply to whichever Power—Russia or Great Britain—should succeed in occupying that country, is evident from the fact that he believed the latter would lose her superiority of position over the former, if once Russian troops were established in Kandahar and Kabul. There existed ample evidence, both geographical and historical, to show that Afghanistan could not support the foreign garrison that would be required to keep her people in subjection, and

that, for the prosecution of a campaign beyond her south-east frontier, Europe must furnish, for all time, both the men and the supplies, since nature did not provide the means by which the amount of her cultivable land could be appreciably increased. But such evidence would have been embarrassing to Lord Lytton, whose whole case against Shere Ali rested on the assumption that Russia was, if not a present, certainly a future danger to India; whereas, encased in the invulnerable armour of ignorance, he could regard his own policy, past, present and future, with cheerful satisfaction, and look forward to its results with equanimity, whether they assumed the guise of a peaceful agreement with Shere Ali—and British officers at Balkh and Herat; a new Amir at Kabul—and British troops in the Kuram; or a general disintegration of Afghanistan—and the British Empire extended to the north of the Hindu Kush.

CHAPTER X

AT THE GATES OF THE KHYBER.

THE Nawab Gholam Hussein Khan arrived in the Afghan capital on the 10th of September, and was received on the 12th by Shere Ali, who handed to him a letter from the Commissioner of Peshawar which had been just brought to Kabul by the Amir's own post, and desired him to open and read it.¹

The letter which had been intended to overtake the emissary on his journey, informed him that the British Mission would leave Peshawar on the 16th, or 17th of September, whether he had, or had not, been admitted to an audience with the Amir; that its objects were friendly, and that any refusal of a free passage to it, or any interruption to its progress would be regarded as an act of hostility; and it directed him to push on as rapidly as possible, and to act firmly should any attempt be made to impede his journey. It was, of course, strictly private, and the Amir had no right to desire to be made acquainted with its contents, nor the Nawab, to comply with the demand; but nothing in the incident justified Lord Lytton in telegraphing to Lord Cranbrook that Shere Ali *had opened* a private letter to an officer of the Indian Government;

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 241.

neither can it be said to have exercised any appreciable influence on the Amir's conduct, since the letter, with the exception of the sentence referring to Gholam Hussein's journey, was identical with one written at the same time to the Mustaufi by Major Waterfield, who had succeeded Pollock as Commissioner of Peshawar, and with three communications made, respectively, to the Governors of Ali Masjid, Dacca and Jalalabad, which, being addressed to officers of his own, must have been doubly offensive to Shere Ali's pride—as, indeed, his words on this occasion amply prove.

“I do not agree to the Mission's coming in this manner,” he burst out when the Nawab had finished reading the obnoxious letter; “until my officers have received orders from me, how can it come? It is as if they wish to disgrace me. It is not proper to use pressure in this way. It will lead to a complete (rupture) and breach of friendship. I am a friend as before and entertain no ill will. The Russian Mission has come and come with my permission. I am still afflicted with grief at the loss of my son. I have had no time to consider the matter. If I get time, whatever I consider advisable will be acted upon. Under these circumstances they can do as they like.”^{1 2}

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 241.

² Lord Lytton's telegraphic summary of Gholam Hussein's letter of the 12th of September runs thus: “He (Shere Ali) merely informed messenger verbally that British Government must indefinitely await his pleasure on subject of them, (Lord Lytton's letters,) which he would consider whenever it suited him, adding that Russian Mission had come with his permission

It was the tampering with his officials, the slighting of his authority in a way which must bring it into contempt with his own servants, which wrung from him this indignant protest and betrayed him into a statement, which Lord Lytton was not slow to turn against him. "The Russian Mission had come with his permission"—was not this avowal an insult flung in the face of the Indian Government whose Envoy he had refused to receive?

If the words had been spoken with the intention of contrasting the different treatment meted out to General Stoliétoff and to Sir Lewis Pelly, they would certainly have been insulting, and foolish into the bargain; but the context shows clearly that no such thought was in the Amir's mind. (Occurring as they do between his assertion that he was still a friend to England, and his plea for consideration on the ground that he was overwhelmed with grief and had no time to consider the demand which was being so harshly pressed upon him—they can only have been intended to imply that what he had conceded to Russia he knew he could no longer refuse to Great Britain, and that the British

and that, in the present state of relations with us, he saw no reason for our sending British one."

Who can recognize in this cold-blooded version of that letter the disjointed, distracted sentences given above? It reads like a deliberate expression of the Amir's resolve to have nothing to do with the British Government, instead of a desperate appeal against the cruel self-will which was robbing him of all chance of resuming his old friendly relations with it. The concluding words are not to be found in the letter, nor to be inferred from anything it contains.

Mission should be honourably received in Kabul, if only time were granted him in which to make arrangements for their coming, freely and in his own way.

That his argument admitted of misconception seems, however, soon to have struck either the Amir himself, or some one of his advisers, for on the morrow of this interview, the Wazir told the Nawab that his master had not invited the Russians to Kabul, but that when once they had crossed the Oxus, he had been compelled by the exposed state of the country and the estrangement of England, to allow them to proceed.¹ Both the Amir's statement and that of his minister were true, and taken together they throw an instructive light on the character and methods of the former. Of a proud, independent, jealous temper, his ruling desire always was to keep Russian and Englishman alike out of his dominions; but when circumstances became too strong for him, he chose to cover his weakness by a voluntary and dignified acceptance of the inevitable. This was what he had done as regarded Stolietoff's Mission, and this, so the Wazir assured Gholam Hussein, he was prepared to do as regarded Sir Neville Chamberlain and his companions, if the Indian Government would but give him the chance. The Wazir went on to say that when some of the Russian servants who were lying ill had recovered, the remaining members of the Mission should be suitably dismissed, and that the Amir would then send a confidential messenger to conduct the British Mission to Kabul, and make himself responsible for its safety and good treatment. The Emissary himself was of

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 242.

opinion that the dismissal of the one Mission, and the sending for the other would take place immediately after the Eed, a Mahomedan festival then close at hand.

The letter reporting the conversation with the Wazir was written on the 13th of September. On the 15th, Gholam Hussein wrote again, warning his Government that the Amir was in a bad humour and that "on account of grief and indisposition he could not bear to hear alternately harsh and conciliatory language;" but assuring it, at the same time, that the Afghan ministers were still hopeful that matters would be satisfactorily arranged, and that it was his own belief that there was still a chance left "for further discussions," if the British Mission's entrance into Afghan territory were delayed.

On the 13th, the Nawab wrote two letters, one of which he sent by the Amir's post, the other by a private hand. In the former, evidently written at the Amir's suggestion, he sketched the terms in which that prince should be addressed by the Indian Government if an increase of friendship and goodwill, and not their "daily destruction" were desired; in the latter he intimated that if that Government, for its own purposes, were content to delay, the proposed conciliatory communication might prove useful; but if it considered delay injurious, then his stay at Kabul was of no further profit and he had better be withdrawn.¹

Even whilst he wrote, the order recalling him to India for which he asked, was being issued at the instance of Sir Neville Chamberlain. The Envoy Elect had arrived in Pesh-

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pages 243—247.

awar on the 12th of September to find Cavagnari already negotiating with the Headmen of the Khyber Tribes occupying lands between that city and Ali Masjid, for a free passage for the British Mission through their respective territories. The arrangements were on the point of completion, on the understanding that they were to lapse if actively opposed by the Amir or his officers—when Faiz Mahomed, the Afghan Commandant at Ali Masjid, sent peremptory orders to the Headmen to return to their villages, and it became necessary either to let them leave Peshawar, or for the Indian Government to guarantee them against the consequences of their disobedience, by taking upon itself, for the future, the payment of the subsidy which the Khyber Tribes had hitherto received from the Amir.

Such a guarantee might content the Headmen; but to detach the Tribes from their dependence upon Afghanistan was an act bordering so nearly upon open hostility to the Amir, that it could not fail to confirm him in his belief that no friendly Mission was knocking at his gates, but the advanced guard of an invading army. Cavagnari, at least, saw the proposal in this light;¹ and the Viceroy to whom the question was referred, telegraphed back that care was required to avoid giving the Amir any plausible ground for complaint by a separate arrangement with the Khyberis before open opposition had been offered to the Mission, and recommending the bringing of matters to a crisis by the despatch of a letter to the Governor of Ali Masjid, stating that the Mission

¹ "Such a measure may prove an obstacle in arranging matters with the Amir."—Telegram from Cavagnari.

would start immediately and, requiring from him a plain answer to the question whether he was prepared to guarantee its safe passage through the Pass. If he said "Yes", the Headmen were to be allowed to obey his summons; if he said "No", or gave an evasive reply, or no reply within a reasonable time, then Sir Neville Chamberlain was to settle matters with the Khyberis and advance, throwing the responsibility for what might happen on Faiz Mahomed.¹

That officer showed no desire for evasion, or delay; he answered Chamberlain's letter at once, in polite, but explicit terms:—There was no need for the Mission to negotiate for an Afridi escort; if the Amir gave consent, he—Faiz Mahomed—and his troops would be their escort to Dakka, Afridis or no Afridis; but they were servants to carry out the orders of their master, and should the Envoy come without the Amir's permission, it would lead to a collision between the Ali Masjid garrison and the Afridis on the one side, and the Mission on the other. The Mir Akhor (Master of the Horse) who was on his way from Dakka, might perhaps have orders to communicate; but the Envoy could do as he chose about stopping at Peshawar till the Mir arrived, or proceeding at once by force.

Chamberlain's first impulse was to address the Mir Akhor direct on the subject of the advance of the Mission; but when he learnt that the Mir had reached Ali Masjid, and still no intimation of his being the bearer of friendly instructions was received, he changed his mind, feeling, as he wrote to the Viceroy, that to repeat to one Afghan official the

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 40.

assurances which he had already made to another, would be to risk placing his Government in the position of seeming to plead for privileges which belonged to it of right; ¹—a reflection which may be accepted as creditable to the Envoy's patriotic pride, but hardly to his knowledge of the subject with which it had become his duty to deal; since no agreement that had ever existed between the British and Afghan Governments had given the former the *right* to send Missions into Afghanistan, and the Amir's *right* to exclude them had been recognised by four Indian Viceroy.

The Nawab's letter of the 15th of September, which was received in Peshawar on the 19th, greatly exasperated Chamberlain, who telegraphed its contents to the Viceroy with ironical comments of his own.—It was clear the Amir was bent on stretching procrastination to the utmost, and on asserting his claim to total independence of action by making the acceptance of the Mission, and the time of the visit dependent on his sole pleasure. If these points were yielded, then he held out the hope that he would hereafter, at his own time, send a person to bring the Mission to Kabul and receive it honourably. He, his ministers and the officers in command of his outposts had all said in the clearest language, that they would, if necessary, stop the advance of the Mission by force. The determination was just as clear to his—Sir Neville's—mind as if half his escort had been shot down; and it seemed to him that, unless the Viceroy accepted this position, all chance of a peaceful solution had passed away. Shere Ali was determined to uphold his

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 257.

own will and dignity at any cost to the dignity of the British Government. The telegram ended with the already mentioned request for the recall of Gholam Hussein, whom it accused of writing as though it were the duty of the Indian authorities to accept wholly the views of the Amir, and who asked for answers to letters in which there was nothing to reply to.

No more momentous telegram than this was ever flashed to Simla, for it was the spark which, falling into a mind prepared to receive it by obstinately nourished suspicions and fears, by long brooding over the imaginary offences of the Amir and long dwelling on the equally imaginary advantages to be reaped by India from the occupation of certain portions of that prince's dominions—was to kindle that great conflagration, the Second Afghan War.

The next day, Sir Neville Chamberlain followed up this telegram by two others in which he informed the Viceroy that the Khyber Headmen had agreed to escort the Mission to Ali Masjid, or, until at any nearer point, it came into contact with the Amir's authorities, and, if necessary, to give it safe conduct back to Peshawar; that the Mission would camp on the morrow at Jamrud—the limit of British territory—and that, the day after, Cavagnari with a small party would proceed to Ali Masjid. A few men, Sir Neville thought, would suffice to test things as well as the whole escort; and he thought it desirable to reduce to a minimum any indignity that might be offered to his Government. If, as he expected and as every Native expected, Faiz Mahomed were to refuse to allow the Mission to pass his post, he should consider that refusal as tantamount to having

been fired on, and return to Peshawar. After long wavering and considerable preparation, the Mission could not move forward out of British territory and be openly turned back, without disgrace in the eyes of India to the Government which had sent it; and he personally would rather have war without the insult.¹

Lord Lytton's telegram in reply echoed his Envoy's views; and Chamberlain's programme was carried out with the result which he and every Native had anticipated. Cavagnari was stopped on the heights above Lala Chena, about a mile from Ali Masjid and within sight of that fort, by the levies of the Amir, who threatened to fire if he approached them; and Faiz Mahomed who came out to meet him, showed himself as firm and bold of speech in the conversation that ensued, as in the letter which he had previously written to Sir Neville Chamberlain.

The interview took place beside a water-mill, shaded by a few trees in the bed of a stream; there being present on the British side, Colonel Jenkins, commanding the Escort, two or three of the Guide Cavalry, some of the Khyber Headmen, and two Native gentlemen, representatives, the one of a Mahomedan, the other of a Hindu Native State, who had joined the Mission at Lord Lytton's particular invitation; and, on the Afghan side, the Naib, or Deputy of the Mir Akhor, a considerable number of the Ali Masjid levies, and some of the Afridi Headmen who had not been parties to the Peshawar negotiations.

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), page 240.

² Sirdar Obed Ulla Khan of Tonk, and Maharaja Pertab Sing of Jodhpur.

Cavagnari opened the discussion by pointing out that Faiz Mahomed and he were servants of their respective Governments, met to carry out the orders they had received, so that, whatever the result of their meeting, there need be nothing personal between them; a sentiment in which the Governor of Ali Masjid cordially concurred. But when the British officer went on to ask whether the officials at Ali Masjid had been instructed to guarantee to the Mission safe passage and proper treatment, and to express the hope that if there were any latitude in the orders received from Kabul, Faiz Mahomed would use it in the interest of peace—the Afghan officer, though still courteous, was quite unyielding.

His desire to act in a friendly manner had been evinced by his having permitted Gholam Hussein Khan to pass his post, an act of politeness for which he had been blamed by the Durbar; he was proving it, at that very moment, by consenting to that interview, and by restraining his troops from firing on the British party; but he had received no orders to let the Mission enter the Khyber and, without such orders, he could not allow it to proceed. If the Mission would wait, he would communicate with Kabul and ask for instructions. Cavagnari replied that he had no authority to agree to further delay; he was there to say that the Mission would move forward next morning, unless the Afghan officials distinctly stated that its advance would be opposed; and once again he begged Faiz Mahomed not to take upon himself the responsibility of stopping the Mission, unless his orders constrained him to do so, for, whatever his action, it would be considered as the Amir's. The Afghan commander owned the greatness of the responsibility, but

could only repeat that he stood there as a sentinel at his post, and, without the orders of the Amir, the Mission should not pass.

"But how do you know," asked Cavagnari, "that the Amir will not be angry with you for trying to stop the representative of a Government with which he has long been on friendly terms?"

Then Faiz Mahomed grew warm:—"Friendly? what friendship was there in the British Government's present conduct? If the Amir had given the word, he himself would have gone down to Jamrud to meet the Mission and bring it up the Pass; but now the British had come on their own account, and had bribed the Amir's servants to give them a passage. They were setting Afridis against Afridis, would cause bloodshed and strife in the country—and they called themselves friends!"

The Afridis who were standing round applauded this speech, and there was an uneasy movement among them which convinced Cavagnari and Jenkins that it would be imprudent to allow the conversation to continue in this tone. The former, therefore, interrupted the Khan by saying that the subject was not one for subordinates to discuss; and then asked, for the last time, whether the Governor of Ali Masjid would oppose the passage of the Mission by force. The answer came quick and sharp:—"Yes, I will; and you may take it as kindness, and because I remember friendship, that I do not fire upon you for what you have done already. You have had a straight answer," he added, as the English officers shook hands with him and mounted their horses.

An answer so straight that it left nothing more to be

said; so Cavagnari and Jenkins rode back to Jamrud to report their failure, and to bear testimony to the courtesy of the Afghan Governor, who, in Cavagnari's opinion, had softened down a great deal of the insult intended, and prevented a collision between his followers and the little British¹ party, which must have proved fatal to the latter.²

The news of the repulse at Ali Masjid was telegraphed to Lord Lytton, who, at once, directed the Envoy to dissolve the Mission, and to intimate to the two Native noblemen attached to it, that he should have pleasure in thanking them in person, and would arrange, should they desire it, for their association with the military operations that had now become necessary.

From his own point of view Lord Lytton had played his cards well; so well that, both at home and in India, the great majority of Englishmen honestly believed at the time, and many believe to this day, that Shere Ali was faithless

¹ Afghanistan No. (1878), page 251.

² It was natural that Cavagnari should feel grateful to the man whose firmness and temper had been his and his companions' sole protection in a most critical hour; but in doing justice to the subordinate, he struck an undeserved blow at the principal. All through this miserable business Shere Ali's behaviour was that of a bewildered, ill-used man, struggling to preserve his prestige in the eyes of his own subjects, but in no way eager to provoke a collision with the neighbour whose power to crush him, individually, he sadly recognized; and it is far more likely that Faiz Mahomed strictly carried out his master's commands in delaying, but not insulting the members of the Mission, than that he had received orders to offer them provocation, which orders he took it upon himself to disobey.

and forsworn, their race's implacable enemy, Russia's secret ally, a prince whom honour, patriotism and the instinct of self-preservation alike called upon them to crush, and they could therefore follow the Viceroy into the contest which he had provoked, without any inconvenient misgivings of conscience; whilst the few men who knew that Shere Ali was far more sinned against than sinning, and who spoke out boldly in his favour, could not gain credence for their defence of a man whom public opinion had already condemned.¹ The cloud of passion which darkened men's minds in those days, has melted away with the lapse of time; but much of the misconception and ignorance out of which it sprang, still lingers. To dispel these is no useless task, since there is always danger of the past's repeating itself, so long as men have not been brought to see its errors; and there is no better way of dispelling them in this case, than by asking ourselves whether, without prejudice to India, or disgrace to England, the war which had now become inevitable, might not have been averted.

Taking into account Lord Lytton's prejudice against Shere Ali, his fears of Russia, his visions of conquest, his expectations of sudden and easy success, and also the characters and ambitions of the men by whom he allowed himself to be influenced—no other line of conduct than that which he pursued could have been expected of him. The situation,

¹ See the Volume entitled *Causes of the Afghan War* as a proof that there were in 1878 men who knew the truth with regard to Lord Lytton's dealings with Shere Ali, and tried to make that truth prevail.

however, might have been very differently treated; and in the hands of a man of Lord Lawrence's wide views and cool judgment, or of Lord Mayo's sincerity of mind and chivalrous generosity, it would almost certainly have been used to re-establish the old friendship with Shere Ali on a firmer basis.

There was no need for haste; for if danger had ever threatened India from, or rather through, Afghanistan, it had passed away before Lord Cranbrook signified his assent to Lord Lytton's schemes for punishing the Amir for having suffered the visit of one Mission, by inflicting upon him another. No one—not even Lord Lytton—had ever professed to believe that, except as the ally of Russia, there was anything to fear from Afghanistan; and with the signature of the Treaty of Berlin, the Russian Government had abandoned all hostile intentions towards Great Britain. Recognizing this, and recognizing also that the Russian Mission had not come to Kabul by the Amir's invitation, but against his wish—a statesman really desirous of continuing at peace with that prince, would have lost no time in requesting the British Government to call upon the Czar to withdraw his officers from Afghanistan—a demand which, in the end, when it could have no influence on the course of events, was actually made and acceded to—and would, meantime, have let it be as widely known as possible that he did not hold Shere Ali responsible for the visit of the Russian Mission, nor see in his reception of it any intention to insult ourselves. Such a statesman would have made use of the terrible domestic and political misfortune which had befallen the Amir in the death of his son and

heir, to renew diplomatic intercourse with him in a way that would have been as gratifying to the prince as it would have been honourable to the Viceroy. He, too, would have sent a Native Emissary to Kabul; but that Emissary would have been Atta Mahomed, or some Mahomedan nobleman of whom it could, at least, be known that he was not personally distasteful to the Amir—not his old enemy, Gholam Hussein; and the one letter entrusted to this messenger would have contained simply the expression of the Viceroy's sympathy and the assurance—sincere, not formal—that nothing should be done by the Indian Government to embarrass him at a time when he was suffering, not only the grief of a bereaved father, but the perplexities of a sovereign who had just witnessed the destruction of all his arrangements for the future of his Kingdom.

In conversation with the Afghan Ministers, the Emissary would have been empowered to take credit to his Government for having rid them of the incubus of the Russian Mission, and to express the hope that when the Amir had recovered from the shock of his son's death and had settled once again the succession to the throne, he would take steps to renew his former intimate relations with Great Britain, either by inviting a British Envoy to his court, or—if he still felt that the subjects to be discussed were too important to be left to the judgment of any subordinate—by proposing a meeting between himself and the Viceroy.

There can be no doubt that Shere Ali would have yielded to wishes so moderate in themselves, and so courteously expressed; all the more readily because of the proof that he would have just received in the withdrawal of Stolietoff's

Mission at the British Government's request, that he could not look to Russia to stand by him against her own immediate interests; and the fact that the reconciliation between him and Great Britain had been brought about at a moment when he not unnaturally feared being called to account for his share in recent events, would have gone far to obliterate the remembrance of the injustice and harshness under which, for a time, he had had to suffer, and to restore his confidence in British good will and good faith.

The line of action sketched above, if adopted by the Indian Government, would have proved eminently practical, for it would have attained its aims—the preservation of peace, and the restoration of good relations with the Amir;—the course actually pursued, tried by the test of results, was eminently unpractical; for the war into which it plunged India secured none of the objects for which it was waged—neither British Officers on the Afghan frontier, nor British influence paramount throughout Afghanistan, nor even a weaker sovereign on the throne of Kabul.

CHAPTER XI

MOBILIZATION.

THOUGH Lord Lytton's whole conduct towards Shere Ali had been steadily leading up to a rupture between the British and Afghan Governments; though he had allowed his thoughts to dwell upon the advantages which Great Britain might reap from such a breach till it had come to seem to him a thing devoutly to be wished; though he had indulged in dreams of conquest so distant and extensive that the resources of the British Empire were inadequate to their achievement—yet the dissolution of the Mission found him unprepared for the struggle he had provoked, and unwilling to open his eyes to its probable dimensions and duration.

The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Frederick Haines, and the Military Member of Council, Sir Samuel Browne, with whom the responsibility for the Viceroy's military action really lay, saw the coming contest in its true proportions, and laboured hard to dissipate his dreams of cheap and rapid victory. But Lord Lytton's visionary mind, fed by the flattering promises of his irregular advisers, refused to believe that the whole business would not be over in a fortnight; and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could be induced to adopt the most ordinary precautions for the protection of India's own frontier.

One step, however, which Sir Frederick Haines had previ-

ously urged upon him in vain, he now consented to take, namely, to strengthen the garrison of Quetta which, far too weak for the position into which it had been thrust, even whilst it had only the hostility of the surrounding tribes to fear, was in imminent danger of destruction now that, at any moment, the prince and people of Afghanistan might have to be reckoned among its possible assailants.

As usually happens when a thing is done hastily and at the eleventh hour, the work of reinforcement proved difficult and costly. The nearest available British troops were at Multan, 576 miles distant from Quetta; and it was therefore to Brigadier-General John Murray, the officer commanding that District,¹ that the order to prepare a mixed force of European and Natives was sent, with directions to despatch it as quickly as possible by the frontier road on the right bank of the Indus to Rajanpur, where it was to concentrate preparatory to beginning its toilsome march through the desert of Baluchistan. Murray, an exceptionally able officer, spared no pains in carrying out his instructions; but the time allowed him was so short, and the means at his disposal so limited, that the troops left Multan badly clothed, badly equipped and provided with an insufficient and hastily improvised transport—equally unfit to bear the terrible heat of the desert in autumn, and the intense cold of the upper end of the Bolan Pass in winter.

¹ Since 1878 the nomenclature of Divisions and Districts have been changed in India. What was a Division in 1878, is now a First Class District; and what was then known as a District, is now called a Second Class District.

Lord Lytton further directed that a force, sufficiently strong to cross the Afghan frontier and threaten Kandahar, should be assembled at Multan and held in readiness to take the field on the 1st of November, and that the contingent of the Nawab of Bahawalpur—one of several Punjabi Princes who had asked that their troops might take part in the impending military movements—should proceed to that city to replace the garrison of which it had been deprived by the more pressing needs of Quetta.¹

But it was not to Quetta, nor yet to Kandahar that the Viceroy looked when maturing his schemes for bringing about the collapse of Shere Ali's authority, but to the Shutargardan Pass, whence, as he fondly fancied, he could dominate Kabul and dictate terms to the Afghan Government. The steps by which he had smoothed the way for the entrance of a British force into the Kuram Valley, have already been enumerated. The regiments destined to take part in that advance had been detailed before the assembling of the Mission at Peshawar; and now, on the 24th of September, two days after its dissolution, orders were issued for their rapid concentration at Thal, the extreme frontier outpost of the Kohat District, divided from Afghan territory by the Kuram River only. To the command of this force the Viceroy appointed Major-General F. S. Roberts,

¹ This particular corps was well disposed and loyal; nevertheless, the employment of troops not under the control of the British Government, nor the command of British Officers, to hold a British base of operations, was open to very grave objections, and ought not to be accepted as a precedent to be followed.

V.C., C.B.,¹ who was to retain his post of Quarter-Master-General whilst, temporarily, handing over its duties to Colonel C. C. Johnson, C.B., who continued to perform them with much tact and ability till the end of the war.

It was impossible to enter upon warlike movements directed towards two widely separated points of the North-West Frontier, without awakening the jealous alarm of the Independent Tribes along its entire length; and it was therefore essential that military preparations should go hand in hand with the political work of soothing that alarm, and inducing the Tribesmen to transfer their very imperfect friendship from the Amir of Afghanistan to the British Government. The Governor-General's Agent in Baluchistan was early informed of the proposed despatch of reinforcements to Quetta, and instructed to secure the co-operation of the Khan of Khelat and of the Tribes dwelling between Khelat and Quetta, in the impending war, and to arrange with them for the passage of British troops through their respective territories.

The Political Officers in the Kohat District were, at the same time, directed to use their best endeavours to allay the fears of the inhabitants of the Kuram Valley by assurances that, so far as they were concerned, the British advance would be of the most friendly character; they being

¹ On the 15th March, 1878, the Viceroy had nominated Roberts to the officiating command of the Punjab Frontier Force, pending the creation of a Chief Commissionership of the North-West Frontier, a post which he was eventually to fill. In May, however, he had been recalled to Simla.

accepted as allies, and their independence strictly respected.¹ Cavagnari's negotiations with the Afridis had never been broken off, but their progress was slow, and as it was felt that on the conduct of this powerful clan would depend that of the Wazaris, Mohmands and other tribes, and, if of a hostile nature, might kindle a conflagration all along the border—measures were hastily adopted to ensure the safety of Peshawar. The Guides Corps from Hoti Mardan, which had been sent to occupy an old Sikh fort at Jamrud as an answer to Cavagnari's rebuff at Ali Masjid, was detained there, though under orders to join the Kuram Field Force; and the 1st Sikhs and a Mountain Battery were summoned from Kohat to strengthen the Peshawar garrison which, prostrated by the malarial fever, always rife in that district in the months of September and October, and exceptionally severe in the autumn of 1878, could scarcely furnish the necessary guards.

The tedious process of buying, one by one, the adherence of the Khyber Tribes proved, at last, too much for Cavagnari's overbearing and impetuous nature; and casting about for some way of bringing them more rapidly under British influence, he hit upon a plan which, early in October, he laid before the Viceroy.

Asiatics are, notoriously, easily affected by success—a brilliant feat of arms at the outset of a campaign usually attaching them for a time, at least, to the side of the victor—and what feat of arms could be more brilliant, and, under the circumstances, more likely to impress the minds of the

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pages 251—252.

border tribes than the surprise and capture of the fort whose garrison had dared to shut the door of the Khyber in the face of a British Mission?

This, then, was Cavagnari's scheme, and he was not mistaken in thinking that it would fire the imagination of a man of dramatic instincts, fond of effect and display, like Lord Lytton. In vain did the Commander-in-Chief and Sir Neville Chamberlain¹ protest, insisting on the great risk to be run and the little advantage to be reaped from the enterprise, even if successful—the Viceroy put more trust in his own military judgment, backed up as it was by the approval of General Roberts whom Cavagnari had consulted before telegraphing his proposal to Simla, than in theirs, and declined to be guided by their advice.

The plan, as finally settled, was as follows:—After a night march, Ali Masjid was to be attacked at day-break by the Guides and 1st Sikhs under Colonel Jenkins, supported by 400 British and 600 Native troops, drawn from the Peshawar garrison, and by three heavy guns; and that it would be successfully surprised, Lord Lytton seems to have taken for granted, since he made no provision for what was to happen in case of failure. But General C. C. Ross, the experienced officer commanding at Peshawar, who

¹ On October the 27th the *Times* correspondent telegraphed: "It was reported with some show of plausibility, that at one time the military arrangements were suffering from divided counsel; that the Viceroy was very anxious to insist upon the advance at once on Ali Masjid, but that the Commander-in-Chief absolutely refused to entertain the idea until his reserves were in complete support."

had been selected to lead the expedition,¹ was less blindly sanguine. To night marches he had a deeply rooted objection, and in surprises he had no faith; therefore, though prepared to attack Ali Masjid, if ordered to do so, and to provide the necessary troops, he did not shrink from pointing out that the operation was a doubtful one, and that, owing to the sickly state of the Peshawar garrison, there would practically be no reserve available to cover his retreat, if retreat became imperative.

There were good reasons for Ross's misgivings. Never was fortress less open to capture by surprise than Ali Masjid. Perched on a detached and precipitous hill, no enemy could approach it unobserved, except under the cover of night; and it was practically impossible for a couple of thousand men, encumbered with heavy cannon, to get within striking distance of it during the few hours when such cover could be enjoyed. But even if the nature of the country had not put insuperable obstacles in the way of a *coup-de-main*—the condition of Peshawar itself was a guarantee that the approach of a British force would be known in Ali Masjid in ample time to prepare for its reception. That city swarmed with Pathans, all of them, under the circumstances of the case, natural,

¹ It was currently reported in India that Roberts was to lead the attack; and, on the 6th October, the *Times* correspondent telegraphed home that "The latest news from Peshawar states that 200 men of each regiment in garrison, together with the Horse Artillery and 40-Pounder Battery, and Sappers and Miners, have proceeded at once to Jamrud. The Guides and a regiment from Kohat will join them there. It is believed that this force, under the command of General Roberts, will attack the fort of Ali Masjid."

unpaid spies and informers, and no movement of troops could hope to escape their vigilant observation, nor fail to be at once reported to Faiz Mahomed; and, after eliminating the advantages attaching to a surprise, the project's chances of success were very small, for the threatened position was exceedingly strong, and the ground over which an attack must be delivered afforded hardly any cover to its assailants.

In 1839 a British force of almost exactly the same composition and strength as that which was to be employed against Ali Masjid, suffered a disastrous repulse at Pashat, a small fort far less strongly situated than that which guards the mouth of the Khyber. This post, which lies in the Kumar Valley, fifty miles north-east of Jalalabad, was attacked by Colonel Orchard at dawn on the 29th of January. Three times his troops rushed gallantly to the assault; again and again, the engineer officer, Captain Pigou, made the most strenuous efforts to blow in the gate—the attack failed, and when ammunition ran short there was nothing to be done but to withdraw, with a loss of sixty-five killed and wounded. The incident was probably unknown to Lord Lytton, for Kaye barely mentions it, and Durand's history had not yet been published; but had he been familiar with its facts, he was the last man to have seen their bearing on any scheme of his own; and, despising the remonstrances of his Commander-in-Chief, he would have allowed little weight to Durand's opinion that "imperative necessity alone can excuse the adoption of a mode of attack so hazardous and so liable to failure from many causes."¹ Dispassionate students of war

¹ The First Afghan War, by Sir Henry Durand, page 184.

will, however, be likely to share the views of the man who blew in the gates of Ghazni, and to ask that the "imperative necessity" for running such a risk at Ali Masjid shall be made clear to them. Was it in the interest of the security of the North-West Frontier, or as an indispensable preliminary to a swift advance on Kabul, that Cavagnari conceived and Lord Lytton adopted this hazardous scheme?—One feature of it, not hitherto mentioned, gives the lie to either supposition. Ali Masjid was to be surprised, stormed, captured and—abandoned! Left empty, swept and garnished for the Amir's troops to re-occupy, or to fall into the hands of the Afridis.

The key to this extraordinary *dénouement* may be found in the fact that the Viceroy, obstinately convinced of the superiority of the Kuram Valley as a road to Kabul, had, at this time, no intention of including the Khyber in the field of the projected military operations; and that he therefore regarded the capture of Ali Masjid, not as a first step in a campaign, but simply as an isolated act of daring, the sole object and use of which was to dazzle and amaze the Tribesmen, far and near.

Ross's representations had no effect except, perhaps, to injure for a time his own professional prospects;¹ but the Military Member of Council when he heard of the projected adventure—which was not till the order for its execution had been issued—insisted so strongly that the folly of abandoning

¹ Though most eager to be sent to the front, Ross was kept tied down to Peshawar all through the first phase of the war, and was not employed during the second

Ali Masjid should not be added to the folly of taking it, that the Viceroy consented to modify this portion of the plan. That the whole scheme fell through, in the end, was due to the timely receipt at Simla of the news that four battalions of Afghan infantry, three field-pieces and a mountain battery had arrived at Ali Masjid, and that further reinforcements were on their way from Dakka.¹ Its relinquishment must have been a great relief to the minds of Lord Lytton's responsible military advisers; but the possible effect on the border tribes of the presence of a large body of Afghan troops in close proximity to the Indian frontier, appeared to them so dangerous, that they strongly urged the diversion to the Peshawar District of that portion of the Kuram Force which was assembling at Kohat.

To this proposal Lord Lytton could not be brought to consent; under continued pressure, however, he was induced to authorize the bringing up of the effective strength of the troops in the Peshawar Valley to 7,100 men by reinforcements drawn from down-country stations, and the mo-

¹ On October the 13th the *Times* correspondent telegraphed:—"It was in contemplation at one time to make a rapid advance against the fort of Ali Masjid and to endeavour to seize it by a *coup-de-main*. . . . Various reasons have prevailed with the Government in favour of delay. In the first place, Ali Masjid has been greatly strengthened by reinforcements of troops, accompanied by artillery. It is said that there are some 6,000 Regular troops occupying the Khyber Pass, so even if the fort, which is situated about nine miles from the entrance of the pass, were captured, it would be very difficult to hold it until all our preparations for a further advance were completed."

bilization of a Reserve of 6,000 men at Lawrencepur, an abandoned cantonment on the Grand Trunk Road, between Attock and Rawal Pindi. In the opinion of Sir F. Haines and Sir S. Browne, the crisis was so serious that the mobilization of an army corps would hardly have sufficed to meet it; but as no further concessions were to be wrung from a man who saw in the costly preparations which his legitimate advisers felt it their duty to press upon him, a rebuke of his more sanguine view of the situation which he had created—they had to be thankful for the little he was willing to grant them; whilst General Ross had to make with the limited forces at his disposal, the best dispositions he could for the safety of the frontier, by adding the 1st Sikhs, a Company of Sappers and Miners and a Mountain Battery to the Guides at Jamrud, and by encamping 3,000 men at Hari Singh ka Burj, an old Sikh fortified post, standing half way between Jamrud and Peshawar.

A little later when, as will presently be seen, the Secretary of State had allowed Lord Lytton a free hand in the matter of military preparations—orders were given to mobilize another Division, composed of Bombay troops, who were to assemble at Sukkur; to hold a considerable number of Madras troops in readiness to move when required to do so; and to attach a siege train, consisting of three Heavy Batteries and an Engineer's Siege Park Equipment to the Division concentrating at Multan¹—an addition which confirmed the rumour that an advance on Herat was contemplated, since, short of

¹ Distribution of the Army, November 1st, 1878; and Assistant Adjutant-General's Return, Kandahar Field Force.

Herat, there was no town in Afghanistan that would need such an amount of heavy cannon either for its capture, or its subsequent defence.

Later still, apparently as an after-thought, or in condescension to the prejudices of his official military advisers who persisted in thinking that the Khyber was the best, as it was certainly the time-honoured route to Kabul—command was given to concentrate an additional Division in the Peshawar Valley, and to move up the Reserve from Lawrencepur. But, although Lord Lytton was now quite ready to mobilize any number of troops, he still hesitated to sanction the expenditure necessary to make of the different forces efficient and mobile bodies, not having as yet been shaken in his conviction that the mere threat of their presence on the Afghan frontier would suffice to disarm all opposition, and insure the triumph of his policy.

CHAPTER XII

THE ULTIMATUM.

WHILST preparations for the invasion of Afghanistan *via* the Kuram and the Bolan routes were being hurried forward, and the military authorities were fighting for leave to afford adequate protection to the most vulnerable and important portion of the North-West Frontier—the Nawab Gholam Hussein Khan had arrived in India, bringing with him the Amir's reply to the letter in which the Indian Government had notified the intended despatch of a British Mission to Kabul. That reply, as telegraphed by Lord Lytton to the Secretary of State, ran as follows:—

“After compliments; your Excellency's despatch regarding the sending of a friendly message has been received through Nawab Gholam Hussein Khan; I understand its purport, but the Nawab had not yet had an audience, nor had your Excellency's letters been seen by me when a communication was received to the address of my servant Mirza Hubibullah Khan, from Commissioner, Peshawar, and was read. I am astonished and dismayed by this letter, written threateningly to a well-intentioned friend, replete with contentions, and yet nominally regarding a friendly Mission. Coming thus by force, what result, or profit, or fruit could come of it? Following this, three other letters from above-mentioned source, in the very same strain, addressed to my officials,

have been perused by me. Thus, during a period of a few days, several letters from that quarter have all been before me, and none of them have been free from harsh expressions and hard words, repugnant to courtesy and politeness, and in tone contrary to the ways of friendship and intercourse. Looking to the fact that I am at this time assaulted by affliction and grief at the hand of fate, and that great trouble has possessed my soul, in the officials of the British Government patience and silence would have been specially becoming. Let your Excellency take into consideration this harsh and breathless haste with which the desired object and place of conference have been seized upon, and how the officials of the Government have been led into discussion and subjection to reproach. There is some difference between this and the pure road of friendship and goodwill. In alluding to those writings of the officials of the opposite Government which have emanated from them, and are at this time in the possession of my own officials, the latter have in no respect desired to show enmity or opposition towards the British Government, nor, indeed, do they with any other Power desire enmity or strife; but when any other Power, without cause or reason, shows animosity towards this Government, the matter is left in the hands of God and to His will.”¹

A second telegram of the same date—19th October— informed Lord Cranbrook that the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Neville Chamberlain and Mr. Alfred Lyall, all considered the tone of the Amir’s letter intentionally

¹ Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pages 252—253.

rude, and as conveying a direct challenge to the British Government; and that in his—Lord Lytton's—opinion a demand for an apology for the Ali Masjid incident would only cause the loss of valuable time, and diminish our prestige with the frontier tribes whilst adding to that of the Amir. The message ended with a request that the British Government would authorize the Indian Government to invade the Kuram and Pishin Valleys, if necessary to advance to Kandahar, and to turn the Afghan troops out of Ali Masjid.¹

We know the terms of the letters which “astonished and dismayed” the Amir, and it is impossible to deny that they were not “free from harsh expressions and hard words;” we know how little consideration was shown to the grief and perplexity into which he had been plunged by the death of his son and heir; we know that the Viceroy had, indeed, acted in “harsh and breathless haste” in the matter of the Mission, and that his whole conduct towards Shere Ali had been such as to destroy that prince's confidence in his professions of goodwill—and knowing all this, it is difficult to see in this reply the “intentional rudeness, the direct challenge” which Mr. Philip Egerton, Sir Neville Chamberlain and Mr. Alfred Lyall discovered in it. It reads, rather, like the despairing cry of a man who, distracted between two evils, knows not which to choose, and still clings to the hope of escaping both.—The British Government, or the British People, might prove kinder than the Indian Government; the Czar to whom he was sending one appeal after another,

¹ Ibid

might interfere to save him from the troubles into which Russian action had precipitated him ; winter was at hand to hinder military operations, and peace might be born of delay ; at the worst, he could but yield at the eleventh hour.

Such were Shere Ali's hopes, and such the fears of Lord Lytton and his private Secretary. "The Viceroy quite understands," so wrote Colley at this very time, "that to undertake operations in such weather (*i.e.*, in the winter rains) would be impossible, but trusts that 'the powers above' may be gracious to us and assist us in slaughtering a few mortals Our principal anxiety now is lest the Amir should send in an apology, or the Home Government suddenly interfere."

To men animated by sentiments such as these, it must have been a great mortification to be informed that the British Government had decided to allow the Amir a *locus penitentie*, and to be directed to prepare and submit for the Secretary of State's approval, a letter calling upon that prince to apologize for Faiz Mahomed's refusal to permit the Mission to enter the Khyber. Lord Cranbrook would sanction no infraction of Afghan territory until a reply to this letter had been received, or until the time had expired within which an apology could be accepted ; and meanwhile Lord Lytton was to devote himself to the massing of troops on the frontier, whilst his military advisers considered the measures to be taken in the event of Shere Ali's sending an unsatisfactory reply to the Indian Government's letter, or leaving it unanswered.

That document, as drafted by the Viceroy and accepted by the Secretary of State for India, was couched in the following terms :—

"I have received and read the letter which you have sent me by the hands of my Sirdar. It will be in your recollection that immediately on my arrival in India I proposed to send you a friendly Mission for the purpose of assuring you of the good will of the British Government, and of removing those past misunderstandings to which you have frequently alluded.

"After leaving this proposal long unanswered, you rejected it, on the grounds that you could not answer for the safety of any European Envoy in your country, and that the reception of a British Mission might afford Russia a pretext for forcing you to receive a Russian Mission. Such refusal to receive a friendly Mission was contrary to the practice of allied States, yet the British Government, unwilling to embarrass you, accepted your excuses.

"Nevertheless you have now received a Russian Envoy at your capital, at a time when a war was believed to be imminent, in which England and Russia would have been arrayed on opposite sides, thereby not only acting in contradiction to the reasons asserted by you for not receiving a British Mission, but giving to your conduct the appearance of being actuated by motives inimical to the British Government.

"In these circumstances, the British Government, remembering its former friendship with your father, and still desiring to maintain with you amicable relations, determined to send, after such delay as the domestic affliction you had suffered rendered fitting, a Mission to you under the charge of Sir Neville Chamberlain, a trusted and distinguished officer of the Government, who is personally known to you; the

escort attached to his Mission, not exceeding 200 men, was much less numerous than that which accompanied you into British territory, and was not more than was necessary for the dignity of my Envoy. Such Missions are customary between friendly neighbouring States, and are never refused except when hostility is intended.

“I despatched by a trusted messenger a letter informing you that the Mission accredited to you was of a friendly character; that its business was urgent, and that it must proceed without delay.

“Nevertheless, you, having received my letter, did not hesitate to instruct your authorities on the frontier to repel the Mission by force. For this act of enmity and indignity to the Empress of India in the person of her Envoy, your letter affords no explanation or apology, nor does it contain any answer to my proposal for a full and frank understanding between our two Governments.

“In consequence of this hostile action on your part, I have assembled Her Majesty's forces on your frontier, but I desire to give you a last opportunity of averting the calamities of war.

“For this it is necessary that a full and suitable apology be offered by you in writing, and tendered on British territory by an officer of sufficient rank.

“Furthermore, as it has been found impossible to maintain satisfactory relations between the two States unless the British Government is adequately represented in Afghanistan, it will be necessary that you should consent to receive a permanent British Mission within your territory.

“It is further essential that you should undertake that no

injury shall be done by you to the tribes who acted as guides to my Mission, and that reparation shall be made for any damage they have suffered from you; and, if any injury be done by you to them, the British Government will at once take steps to protect them.

“Unless these conditions are accepted, fully and plainly, by you, and your acceptance received by me not later than the 20th November, I shall be compelled to consider your intentions as hostile, and to treat you as a declared enemy of the British Government.”¹

It will be in the recollection of the reader, to use Lord Lytton's phrase, that the Mission as originally announced by him was to be sent simply to communicate two facts—the new title of the Queen, and his own assumption of office; and that when the flimsy pretence was brushed aside by the Amir, and it became necessary to give some more adequate reason for a step which the British Government well knew to be obnoxious to the Afghan Government, the desire to give Shere Ali an opportunity of expressing his wishes—a friendly desire emphasized by most unfriendly threats—was substituted for the motive originally assigned. It will also be within his recollection that the misunderstandings mentioned in the Ultimatum had been assumed by Lord Lytton and denied by Shere Ali; and that they were skilfully used by the former as an argument for insisting on the latter's submission to proposals which were the true cause of the only anxiety from which he suffered; also, that while the “unwillingness to embarrass” the Amir had showed

¹ *Ibid.*, pages 254—255.

itself in raising up for him enemies on every side—the acceptance of his excuse for declining to receive a British Mission had taken the form of repudiating all British engagements towards him, of threatening him with the loss of Kandahar and Herat, whenever it should suit British interests to take possession of those provinces, and of breaking off all diplomatic intercourse with his Government. Further, he will remember that by its own agents and spies, the Indian Government had been made acquainted with the fact that Shere Ali had striven to hinder the journey of the Russian Mission, and that Stolietoff and his companions were kept in something very closely resembling imprisonment during their stay in Kabul, treatment which went far to confirm Atta Mahomed's statement that the Amir looked upon all Russian agents as an embarrassment; nor can he have forgotten that the consideration shown to that prince in his deep affliction was of the most perfunctory character;—and with all these facts fresh in his memory to assist his judgment of the document which was to furnish the Amir with a *locus penitentiae*, he will be able to see how nicely calculated it was to relieve Lord Lytton of his “principal anxiety”—the fear lest, once again, Shere Ali should yield, “through helplessness,” to a demand which lapse of time and frequent repetition could not invest with the justice which it had lacked from the beginning. To say that it had been found impossible to maintain satisfactory relations between the two States unless the British Government were represented in Afghanistan by a British Envoy, when those relations had been of the most friendly description so long as there had been no question of sending such an Envoy to Kabul—was

too glaring a perversion of the truth for Shere Ali to be able to retain a shadow of respect for the Government that could be guilty of it; and the assertion that the refusal to receive a friendly Mission was contrary to the practice of civilized States, must have affected him even more painfully, since it denied the basis of the alliance it affirmed, and could be made to justify not only this one demand, but any other that Lord Lytton, or his successor, might think well to put forward. We have already seen that it could be made to cover the right to establish British telegraph lines throughout Afghanistan; the right of access for British subjects, official and unofficial, to all parts of that kingdom; and the right to expect protection for those subjects—in a word, the right to force a line of conduct, easy and natural to a civilized European State upon a less than half civilized Asiatic State, and to hold its Government responsible for the results of the experiment.

Still, however much we may condemn the tone of the Ultimatum and question its veracity, it was at least perfectly consistent with all Lord Lytton's previous conduct towards the Amir—but how had it come about that the British Government which had recently given its consent to the projected *coup-de-main* at Ali Masjid—an act only to be justified on the assumption that Great Britain and Afghanistan were already at war¹—should now have repu-

¹ "To march an army into a neighbouring country by which we are not threatened, and without having endeavoured to obtain by reason and justice, an equitable reparation for the wrongs of which we complain, would be introducing a mode

diated that assumption, and claimed for Shere Ali a period of grace in which to make his submission?

The principal reason for this inconsistency must, no doubt, be sought in the agitation which had arisen in England when the news of the rebuff suffered by the Chamberlain Mission, had suddenly awakened her people to the fact that they were standing on the threshold of a second Afghan war; an agitation which, in the case of its leaders, must have been embittered by the consciousness that they had been lulled into an inaction, which it was now probably too late to repair, by false assurances as to the unchanged nature of our relations with the Amir.¹

The first note of warning and protest was sounded by Lord Lawrence in a letter of the 27th September to *The*

pregnant with evils to mankind, and sapping the foundations of the safety and tranquillity of States."—Vattel, book III, chap. 4.

¹ On the 20th of April, 1877, the Peshawar Conference having been practically broken off in February and formally closed at the end of March, Lord George Hamilton assured the House of Commons that no change whatever had occurred in the relations between the British Government and the Amir; and on the 15th of June, Lord Lytton's despatch of the 10th of May, being then in his hands, Lord Salisbury told the House of Lords, that we had not tried to force an Envoy upon the Amir at Kabul, that the troops assembled on the North-West Frontier had been brought together without any reference to such a demand; that our relations with the Amir of Kabul had undergone no material change since the previous year; that he, the speaker, did not believe that Shere Ali was worse disposed towards us than hitherto, or that his feelings were in any way more embittered towards the British Government.

When the truth of these statements was challenged after the

Times, in which he had the courage to contend that the ill-advised step of assembling the Mission at Peshawar before ascertaining whether it would be allowed to proceed to Kabul, had brought upon us the affront under which we were smarting; that the Amir in declining to receive that Mission¹ was acting in accordance with an old policy, based upon grounds which we ourselves had formerly accepted as valid; that Great Britain could gain nothing, whilst India must lose much, by a war of which it was impossible to foresee the end; and that as, in many instances, we had been wrong in our policy towards the Amir, there could be no real dishonour in our coming to terms with him.

Other statesmen, notably Lord Grey and Lord North-

publication of the Afghan papers, their author defended himself by explaining that in using the expression "Amir at Kabul," he had referred to the "city," not to the "country," "state," or "Government" of Kabul; and that when he had said that the Amir's feelings were in no way "more embittered towards the British Government," he meant to imply that "they were already as hostile to us as they well could be." When it was retorted that he must have known that his hearers had accepted his statements not as he understood them, but in their simple, natural sense, as conveying assurances of the continued good understanding with the Amir for which the Duke of Argyll had asked—Lord Salisbury justified the deception he could not deny, by declaring that if he were to be expected to give no answer, except such as contained a complete revelation of the policy of the Government, the only inference he could draw was that, in future, such questions must receive no answer at all.

¹ The true facts with regard to the Mission were not known in England when Lord Lawrence wrote this letter.

brook, shared Lord Lawrence's views,¹ and pleaded for them with pen and voice; and on the 16th of November, an Afghan Committee, entirely unconnected with party, was formed whose chairman, Lord Lawrence, wrote at once to Lord Beaconsfield requesting him to receive a deputation from their body; its object in seeking the interview being to induce him to stop, by telegram, the immediate outbreak of war, and to ask for the publication of all papers bearing on Afghan and Central Asian affairs, from the 1st of April, 1876, onwards, and the immediate calling together of Parliament. The Prime Minister refused to receive the deputation; and Parliament was not summoned, nor the papers asked for published till the die had been cast, and there was nothing left to the members of either House but the opportunity of criticising a policy they could no longer hope to influence. Yet the agitation had not been altogether barren, since it had helped to restrain the British Government from plunging into war with the arbitrary haste which alone would have satisfied Lord Lytton, and so given time for his military advisers to make good the more glaring

¹ Among the supporters of Lord Lytton's policy who took up the cudgels for it in the columns of the *Times*, the first place must be assigned to Sir James Stephens; but that Journal was itself its chief and most persistent advocate. The leaders published by it on the subject well repay perusal, based as they are upon the letters of its Special Correspondent in India, which betray an intimate acquaintance with Lord Lytton's Minute, or, at least, with the views embodied in that document, containing, indeed, many passages which it is hard to believe were not written by the Viceroy's Private Secretary.

deficiencies in the equipment and organization of the troops who were to take part in it.

That salutary delay was due, however, in part to a second and more secret cause. It will be remembered that Stolietoff wrote to the Afghan Foreign Minister from Tashkent, on the 21st of September, that he was starting that day to see the Emperor. On the 8th of October he wrote to the same correspondent from Livadia, where Alexander II was staying, that "he was busy, day and night, in the Amir's affairs and that, thank God, his labours had not been without result. The great Emperor was a true friend to the Amir and to Afghanistan, and would do whatever he might think necessary."

These opening lines ran smoothly and pleasantly enough; the remainder of the letter must have been less easy to write. "Of course you have not forgotten," so it went on, "what I told you, that the affairs of Kingdoms are like a country which has many mountains, valleys and rivers. One who sits on a high mountain can see these things well. By the power and order of God there is no Empire equal to that of our great Emperor Therefore whatever our Government advises you, you should give ear to There are many things which you cannot understand, but our Government understands them well. It often appears that a thing which is unpleasant at first, is regarded as a blessing afterwards."

The unpleasant thing which was to prove a blessing in the end, though Stolietoff does not actually say so, was that he who sat on a high mountain—*i. e.* the Emperor—was not prepared to take up arms in the Amir's defence; and the advice to which Shere Ali was bidden to give ear, took the

form of a recommendation to make peace with the English publicly, whilst continuing in secret to prepare for war, unless he could look to his brothers on the other side of the river (Indus)—*i.e.* the Mahomedans of India—to come to his assistance, in which case he was to go on, in the name of God.¹

On October the 9th, the day after Stolietoff had penned this letter, Shere Ali wrote to the Emperor informing him that the British were busy organizing expeditions to Afghanistan, and significantly reminding him that Dost Mahomed had preferred the friendship of the Emperor Nicholas to that of the English Government; and that, "in consequence, Afghanistan had suffered what it suffered." "I hope," so the letter ended, "that your Majesty will kindly send me friendly assistance, befitting the greatness of your Imperial Majesty, for the maintenance of the tranquillity of Afghanistan."²

This letter was enclosed in one to General Von Kaufmann, warning him that he might shortly hear that the British and Afghan Governments were at war, and that the Amir expected him to lend his friendly aid in any way he—Kaufmann—might think proper.

On November the 4th, Kaufmann mentioned, in notifying to Shere Ali that an extract of his letter to the Emperor had been telegraphed to that monarch, that he had been informed, on good authority, that the English wanted to come to terms with him, and advised him to make peace with them if they gave him the chance; and three weeks

¹ Central Asia, No. 1 (1881), page 18.

² Ibid., page 19.

later he wrote, at the Emperor's desire, to inform him that the British Ministers had given a pledge to the Russian Ambassador in London that they would not interfere with the independence of Afghanistan.¹

Russian mediation, then, had been at work both in London and at Kabul; and the Emperor Alexander must be credited with an honest attempt to avert the dangers which he had brought upon Afghanistan, and with some share in securing to her sovereign a period of grace in which to make his submission to the offended majesty of England. It was not the Czar's fault that the distrust engendered by "the conduct and manners of the British Government," had sunk so deep into Shere Ali's mind that he felt convinced it would not "listen to any overtures for reconciliation and the removal of the misunderstanding, although no shots had yet been exchanged,"² and, in that conviction, delayed answering the Ultimatum till the respite granted to him had virtually expired.

¹ Ibid., 21.

² Ibid., 22.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RUSSO-AFGHAN CORRESPONDENCE.¹

THE point at which this narrative has now arrived—a point at which the stream of events whose fatal flow it has been tracing, was temporarily arrested—is the most favourable that is likely to occur for reviewing the whole of the correspondence between the Amir and the Russian officials in Central Asia, some portions of which were discussed in the foregoing chapter.

It began with the letter from General Von Kaufmann, Governor of Russian Turkestan, containing phrases so disquieting to Shere Ali that he forwarded it with many anxious questions and comments of his own to Lord Mayo, who interpreted the ambiguous passages in a friendly sense, and bade the Amir answer it in courteous and neighbourly fashion. This communication was followed by another, excusing the friendly reception which Kaufmann had accorded to Abdur Rahman, the Amir's nephew and opponent. Each contained also warm expressions of good-will towards the people and ruler of Afghanistan;—expressions which Shere Ali politely acknowledged and reciprocated, whilst taking no notice of the explanation of the hospitality afforded to his rival at Tashkent.

¹ Central Asia, No. 1 (1881).

In the succeeding letters—all short—Kaufmann kept Shere Ali informed as to the movements of Russian troops in Central Asia, evidently with the object of dispelling any anxiety that those movements might be likely to awaken in his correspondent's breast; and at the same time displayed his own knowledge of the things that were happening in Afghanistan, and his interest in all that concerned the welfare of the Amir. In this way, Shere Ali received, at first hand, the news of the capture of Kuldja in 1871, and of the conquest of Khiva in 1873; and also congratulations on his reconciliation to his son, Yakub Khan, and the announcement of the approaching return to Kabul of a relation of his own, who had been for three years in the Czar's service, and for whom Kaufmann solicited his favour.

An allusion to the boundary between Afghanistan and Bokhara, in a letter of Von Kaufmann's, dated June 28, 1872, aroused the Amir's quick suspicions; and, on this and on a second, similar occasion, Lord Northbrook had to instruct the Kabul Agent to allay them by the assurance that the Government of India saw nothing to be alarmed at in the words to which he had taken exception. Eighteen months later, it was the Viceroy who was uneasy. In a letter written by General Kolpakovsky, acting Governor-General of Turkestan in Kaufmann's absence, mention had been made of some request of the Amir's, and Lord Northbrook asked the Secretary of State for India, if he knew what the expression referred to. The explanation, a very simple one, is contained in the Kabul Diary of November 8th to 11th, 1873. Abdur Rahman had been stirring up some of the Turkoman chiefs to rebellion, and the Amir had asked that

measures might be taken by the Russian officials at Tashkent to prevent such hostile action on the part of a man to whom they were granting an asylum.

On the 25th January, 1874, we come to the first letter written by the Amir to the Governor of Turkestan, which is not an answer to some communication from the latter. This contains simply a notification of the appointment of Abdulla Jan as heir-apparent. Von Kaufmann, being in St. Petersburg, Kolpakovsky acknowledged this announcement, and gave, in his turn, the news of the marriage of the Emperor's daughter to the second son of the Queen of England. Kolpakovsky's letter was dated February 25, 1874, and there seems to have been no other till July 12, 1875, when Kaufmann, having returned to his post, wrote to express his hope that the family alliance concluded between the two Royal Houses would be a favourable omen for all the countries under the protection of the two Sovereigns, thus brought into close relationship.

On the 29th October, 1875, Kaufmann briefly announced the occupation of Khokand, but followed up this letter by another, written in the month of February 1876, giving a detailed account of the circumstances under which that occupation had been effected, and justifying the step on the ground that it had been provoked by the quarrels of a number of rival claimants to the Khanship, and was taken, not in the interests of Russia, but at the request of the people of Khokand themselves, and to afford them tranquillity.

There is an undertone of doubt and dissatisfaction in the Amir's cautious and somewhat obscurely worded reply, dated

August 27, 1876. He offered no opinion on the merits of the particular case; but remarked, in a general way, that "if those persons who are in the neighbourhood, or propinquity of great and powerful States, for whom it is easy and feasible to undertake certain affairs in their country, or city, according to their capabilities and the customs and usages of that country and city, maintain (friendly) relations with (those) States, undoubtedly it is not politic or advisable that they should deviate from such relations."—In other words, that if persons, whom capacity and custom entitle to be the rulers of a country bordering on a Great State, are in political relations with that State, they will be wise to do nothing to injure those relations.—"But as the Government of His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor, is great and powerful, and as it is customary for its neighbours and the people in its adjacent territories to expect kindness and rectitude from it, if such great and noted Government shows kindness and mercy to the people in its neighbouring, or adjacent territories, certainly, it will lead to the encouragement (*lit.*: hopes) of neighbours, and the comfort of the people of God."

The first sentences, whilst conceding the wisdom of keeping on good terms with Russia, distinctly vindicated the rights of the princes of countries bordering on her dominions, and deprecated Russian interference in their dynastic quarrels; and the personal motive which dictated it, is apparent. Had not just such dissensions as were alleged as an excuse for the annexation of Khokand to Russia, occurred again and again in Afghanistan, practically at the death of each Amir? Would not such dissensions occur again, probably, at his—

Shere Ali's—own death; and might they not be made to cover the seizure by Russia of Herat, or Afghan Turkestan? The concluding sentence has in it the ironical ring which we have heard before. That Kaufmann felt the doubt and uneasiness troubling the Amir's mind, as he penned this letter, is shown by the haste with which he replied to it—on October 1st, and the skill with which, in repeating the Amir's words, he contrived to give to them a turn intended to rob them of their sting, and to vindicate the "kindness and rectitude" of Russia. "Your observations show," so he writes, "that your Highness fully knows and understands the rules of friendship existing between the Governments alluded to by you. This friendship should not, however, be advantageous to one Power alone, or one Tribe, or one Party alone, but to (several) States, or to the People of the whole World. Should neighbouring States act on this principle or rule, no ill-feeling will ever spring up between them. The confidence which we have reposed in one another, will, I hope, make the friendship existing between Russia and Afghanistan firm."

The bearer of this letter, which reached Shere Ali on the 22nd November, 1876, a certain Mulla Saifullah, seems to have remained many months in Kabul; for when the Amir wrote on the 18th of October, 1877, acknowledging its receipt, he mentioned that he had just received another letter from Kaufmann, asking why he had kept his messenger so long. "The reason why I detained him the first five days," he explained, "was that it was awfully cold when he arrived here; and afterwards, he fell ill, and, consequently, I could not dismiss him. You may rest assured that my object in

detaining him, was only to give him rest and show him hospitality."

Kaufmann's letters of February and October the 1st, 1876, and a brief note written by him on the 6th of July of the same year, merely announcing his return from another journey to St. Petersburg, are the letters which excited such vehement suspicions in Lord Lytton's mind; yet we know that all had been opened in the presence of the British Agent, Atta Mahomed, and the former, at least, forwarded by him to the Indian Government, which, at the moment, made no pretence of discovering in it anything contrary to the understanding regarding Afghanistan arrived at by the British and Russian Governments in the year 1873. But supposing it *had* transgressed the agreement, that would not have been Shere Ali's fault. In fairness, he could only be judged by his answer to it, and this, as we have shown, betrayed no delight in Russia's progress in Central Asia, but rather anxiety, veiled, it is true, but yet discernible enough to him who cared to discern it. So far, indeed, as this correspondence is to be used as a means of determining the steadiness of the Amir's loyalty to the British alliance, *his* letters only must be the test applied. He could not prevent Kaufmann's writing to him; he would rather have been without his letters; he replied to them civilly, in the first instance, at Lord Mayo's desire; his own letters were as colourless as he could make them, mere echoes of his correspondent's sentiments; and, among them, there is but one spontaneous communication—the brief note announcing his choice of an heir. By these letters, Shere Ali might well have elected to stand or fall, for they furnish

the most complete vindication of him from the charge of having coquetted with Russia, whilst professing to distrust her, and to desire only the friendship of Great Britain.

Those written between the departure of Stolietoff and the expiration of the period of grace accorded to Shere Ali by the British Government, must be judged by a different standard. No one can expect to find *them* colourless and indifferent. Whilst he wrote them, the Amir's existence and that of his country were at stake, and they show him—despairingly distrustful of British professions of good intentions towards himself and his people, and conscious of his inability to cope with British enmity—turning, indeed, to Russia for help, but turning reluctantly, proudly; rather suggesting to the Emperor his duty towards the Sovereign and State he had helped to ruin, than asking him to do it. But, once again, there is nothing in them of which any honourable Englishman, knowing all the circumstances, could feel himself justified in complaining.

The letters written after the outbreak of hostilities, will be dealt with later; meantime, we will close this examination of the bulk of the correspondence by pointing out its most remarkable feature:—From first to last, it contains no hint of any desire on the Amir's part to make a bargain with the Russian Government; no trace, even in the letters written in his darkest days, of a readiness to barter away the independence of his country in exchange for any help to be rendered to himself.¹

¹ When I inquired of Yakub Khan what had become of the correspondence which must have been carried on between his

father and the Russians he declared that he had destroyed it all on his way to Gandamak; nevertheless, a certain number of letters from Generals Kaufmann and Stolietoff came into my possession." (Forty-One Years in India, Vol. 2, p. 248.)

The use of the expression "a certain number of letters" in this passage, implies that there were *other* letters which did not fall into Lord Roberts' hands. Of this, there is absolutely no external proof, and the internal evidence contained in the correspondence is directly opposed to such an assumption. One letter corresponds to another throughout, even where long intervals of time occur between them—the only break of continuity that can be detected being the absence of a letter written by Kaufmann on the 27th August, 1877, which, judging from Shere Ali's short reply to it, must have been of an entirely formal and complimentary nature. Further, the terms of the letter in which Kaufmann announced the despatch of the Russian Mission, imply no previous understanding between him and the Amir.

Instead, then, of these letters being a portion of those which passed between the Amir and the Governor of Russian Turkestan, it seems certain that they formed the entire correspondence. This view receives confirmation from the fact that when Prince Lobanoff, on the 24th January, 1881, brought to the British Foreign Office copies of the whole Russo-Afghan correspondence, furnished to the Emperor by General Von Kaufmann, they were found to differ from the English version of the same correspondence in a few unimportant particulars only—the discrepancies being due to imperfect translation.—See *Central Asia*, No. 1 (1881), page 29.

CHAPTER XIV

INDIA IN 1878.

SINCE India never had had anything to fear from Afghanistan, and the danger supposed to be threatening her from Russia, the illusory nature of which was now fully recognized by the British Government,¹ had passed away—it would seem natural to believe that Lord Lytton must have been encouraged to carry his original Instructions to their furthest consequences by the knowledge that the moment was singularly propitious for the realisation of the policy which they prescribed. A full treasury, a prosperous people, a thoroughly efficient army, too large for its legitimate duties and pining for action, have often been the determining cause of war; and, from the point of view of the ambitious soldier, they may certainly claim to be considered as its excuse.

¹ “One would suppose, from all we hear that our Indian Empire is on the eve of being invaded, and that we are about to enter into a struggle with some powerful and unknown foe. In the first place, my Lord Mayor, Her Majesty’s Government are by no means apprehensive of any invasion of India by our North-West Frontier. The base of operations of any possible foe is so remote, the communications are so difficult, the aspect of the country is so forbidding, that we do not believe under these circumstances any invasion of our North-Western Frontier is practicable.”—Lord Beaconsfield’s Speech at the Lord Mayor’s Banquet, on the 9th November, 1878.

If then it can be shown that those three elements of strength were present in India in the autumn of 1878, Lord Lytton must, at least, be acquitted of reckless imprudence in his selection of the time for forcing the hand of the Home Government, and precipitating a conflict with Afghanistan.¹ But what are the facts as revealed by the Financial Statements for 1876-77, 77-78, 78-79, and by the volumes of the "Statement of the Moral and Material Progress of India," compiled during the same period?

When Lord Lytton landed in India in April 1876, the shadow of famine had already fallen upon the Madras and Bombay Presidencies, and the Provinces which had escaped the scourge were being drained of their stores of grain to supply the needs of their starving neighbours; with the result that, when the winter rains of that year and the monsoon in 1877 failed throughout the greater part of India, the Punjab, the North-West and Oudh felt the pinch as acutely as did the districts where drought and scarcity were being experienced for the second time.² The distress in 1877 far exceeded that of 1876, and matters were little better in 1878, for not only was the character of the rainfall

¹ "Lord Beaconsfield had added that he had wished to temporize with Shere Ali, but that the hand of the Home Government had been forced by the inopportune haste of the Indian Government, who had precipitated the matter."—Despatch of Count Schouvaloff, reporting conversation between himself and Lord Beaconsfield in November 1878. See *Central Asia*, No. 1 (1881), page 31

² *Statement of the Moral and Material Progress of India, 1877-78*, p. 35.

excessively capricious and unsatisfactory,¹ but the long continuance of the famine, by exhausting the local supplies, had increased the difficulty of ministering to the needs of the population, and had taken from the miserable sufferers all strength to resist the ravages of the diseases which had followed in its train.

In 1877, in the Bombay Presidency, 57,252 persons died from cholera, 27,369 from smallpox, 336,965 from fevers and 60,257 from bowel complaints, and the mortality from the same causes was equally high in the Madras Presidency. But the general health of the country was still worse in 1878; there were 170,524 deaths from smallpox in the North-West Provinces and Oudh, and 982,117 from fever, whilst in the Punjab, which was to be the base of the operations against Afghanistan, the death-rate was the highest on record since the introduction of registration.

To put the facts in their briefest form—during the first three years of Lord Lytton's administration, 5,750,000 natives of India perished from want, and an equal number, over and above the normal death-rate, died of diseases of all kinds;²

¹ *Ibid.*, 1878-79, p. 36, 37, 38.

Much damage was done to the crops on various parts of the Bombay Presidency by locusts, and those in the Deccan and Carnatic were ravaged by field rats. No less than 12,000,000 of these creatures were killed after the Government had offered a reward for their destruction.-- *Ibid.*, p. 39.

² The Tables of mortality in the "Statements" do not give the whole number of deaths during the years with which we have been dealing, but only such as were due to cholera, smallpox, fevers and bowel complaints; but as the death-rate from

whilst £18,500,000¹ were spent on relief works and the gratuitous distribution of food, and in many districts the land tax had to be largely remitted.

During the two first years of dearth, the loss to the revenue from the deep agricultural distress was compensated, in some slight degree, by enhanced receipts from the customs' duties; but this improvement in trade, when carefully looked into, is seen to be only a fresh proof of the straits to which all classes in India were reduced.

Take the export trade:—India, too poor to consume her own wheat, sent it to England where, owing to a bad harvest, it sold at a high price; for the same reason, the high-class Indian sugars went to Europe, and the abnormal demand for grain and sugar bags advanced the value of jute, and encouraged its manufacture. The amount of rice exported fell off, indeed; but the enhanced price more than balanced the deficiency. The immense mortality among the live stock of the peasants gave a great impetus to the trade in hides and skins.

The Import Returns tell the same tale of need stimulating

these four causes in 1878 was 28·89 *per* thousand and the average death-rate from all causes, including accidents, in the ten years 1883-1892 was only 27·33 *per* thousand, the assumption that during the three famine years there were 5,000,000 deaths from sickness of all kinds, in excess of the usual mortality of such a period, cannot err on the side of exaggeration.

¹ The total estimated expenditure on famine relief during the years 1876-77 and 1877-78 was £18,550,336. Of this sum £8,600,336 were spent on re-productive works, many of which, however, owing to the conditions under which they were planned and executed, were utterly useless, or of little permanent value.

commerce :—The Persian Gulf sent large quantities of inferior grains, pulse and dates to take the place of the exported wheat, and the Mauritius, cheap sugar as a substitute for the better article which had gone abroad. In other words, the abnormal poverty of the Indian people compelled them to part with products which under ordinary circumstances would have remained in the country, and to accept inferior articles in their stead. Further, the enormous quantities of food which had to be distributed to the afflicted districts necessitated a large addition to the rolling stock of the various railways; and the increase in the amount of coal imported must have been due to the same cause, since there was a falling off in the imports of machinery for manufacturing purposes. In the spring of 1878, even this fictitious commercial activity died away, exports and imports alike declining so heavily that the National accounts, when they were made up in March 1879, revealed a loss in the private sea-borne trade of £15,610,212.¹

And if there was nothing in the trade of India and the state of her finances to encourage the Government in indulging in that most expensive of all luxuries—war: and if the miserable condition of her people cried aloud for the fostering hand which could only be extended to her in time of peace—neither did the state of her army afford any excuse for a cruel and wanton disregard of the pressing needs of the whole civil population.

That army had not, indeed, suffered from actual famine;

¹ *Statistical Abstract relating to British India from 1869-70 to 1878-79.*

but the Native soldiers had found their pay—often shared with starving relations—quite inadequate to procure for them food of good quality, and the inferior grains with which they had satisfied their hunger, had undermined their health. In every Presidency dysentery, cholera, small-pox and fever were rife among them, and the European troops were little less sickly than they.¹ Nor was this all:—Speaking of a former Afghan war, the Duke of Wellington had said that “the whole question was one of commissariat; that of commissariat, one of transport.” Judged by this dictum, the second Afghan war stood condemned before its birth; for not only had the famine enormously raised the price of the provisions which would have to be collected for the use of the troops, but it had decimated the people’s stocks of cattle, camels, ponies and mules, which would have to be drawn upon for transport purposes, and the Government’s own supply of these animals had been practically exhausted by the drain of an unusually protracted frontier war.

For many years the general condition of the North-West Frontier had been one of peace and good order, not a single punitive expedition having been sent against the Independent Tribes between 1872 and 1877.^{2 3} In 1875 the refusal of

¹ *Statement exhibiting Moral and Material Progress of India, 1878-79, pp. 114, 115, 116.*

² *Record of Expeditions against the North-West Frontier. Appendix IV.*

³ The credit of this peace and good order is due to the admirable system of border defence organized by Lord Lawrence when Chief Commissioner of the Punjab. What that policy was

some sections of the Afridi Tribe to repair the military road through the Kohat Pass, was punished by the blockade of the whole of the Pass Afridis, which blockade was continued during part of the year 1876 against such subdivisions of the Tribe as had not given in their submission.

But in the autumn of that year a fresh and far more serious dispute arose between the Indian Government and the Adam Khel branch of the Afridis. We have seen that Lord Lytton's lust of territory had been so inflamed by Lumsden's glowing picture of the political and military advantages

and how administered is thus described by Dr. Thornton in his *Life of Sir Robert Sandeman*.

"While the passes were carefully watched and the frontier roads patrolled, every means was taken for the promotion of friendly intercourse. Thus all the frontier customs were abolished, a capitation tax levied by the Sikhs on foreigners was discontinued, and the land-tax on the holdings of the independent tribesmen was reduced to a nominal sum; roads were made connecting the frontier passes with the market towns; free hospitals and dispensaries were established; steamers for the conveyance of passengers and goods were started on the Upper Indus, and inundation canals—a priceless boon in rainless tracts, extending cultivation and affording food and work to thousands—were vigorously developed in the Southern Derajat. So long as they were friendly, the Tribesmen had free access to British Territory; they were welcome to hold land, temporarily or permanently, to enlist in our army, and to make use of our markets, hospitals and dispensaries; and some of the wild spirits of the frontier, representatives of tribes, or sections of tribes, adjoining, were utilized as a local militia in aid of the regular troops."

which would accrue to India from the occupation of the Kuram, that he had made up his mind to possess himself of that valley; and a road, practicable for artillery, through the Kohat Pass seeming a necessary preliminary to this annexation, orders were given for the construction of such a highway.

The measure in itself, apart from its motive, was a good one, since it was important to the security of the then existing frontier that Kohat should have improved communications with Peshawar; but the time selected for its execution was ill-chosen. The occurrences of the preceding year had greatly exasperated the tribesmen of the Kohat District, and a wise statesman would have sought to allay their excitement before pressing upon them new demands. But Lord Lytton was not wise, nor had he wise counsellors at his elbow; so the road was begun, and when the Pass Afridis set themselves to hinder its construction, the blockade against them was re-imposed.

Their resistance collapsed in March 1877, but in July the Jowakis—another section of the same great clan, inhabiting the mountainous country between the Kohat Pass and the Indus, who had been heavily fined for aiding their kinsfolk—raided into British territory, cutting telegraph wires and attacking villages with surprising audacity. In August a force of 1,750 men, exclusive of levies, under the command of Colonel Mocatta, penetrated into Jowakiland; nevertheless the outrages continued, culminating in an attack on a body of Native Infantry, in which 14 sepoy were killed, or wounded.

Measures on a large scale had now become necessary; and

accordingly in November, Brigadier-Generals C. P. Keyes, C. B., and C. C. G. Ross, C. B., with a total force of 7,400 men, occupied the mountain fastnesses of the recalcitrant tribe, Keyes' column operating from Kohat, Ross's from Peshawar; even then it was March 1878 before the Jowakis submitted, and the Force could return to British territory. This little war ran away with the transport and stores that Lord Lytton had been sedulously collecting for the equipment of the Kuram Expedition; and all that he gained by it was "a very fair mountain road" *not* practicable for artillery, which a little management and a few thousand rupees would have given him without the expenditure of a single baggage animal.

It may seem strange that what was, after all, but a small affair, should have exhausted the transport resources of the Indian army, but a consideration of the constitution of that body dissipates the mystery. The old Anglo-Indian army which had gone to pieces in the Mutiny, had had, in time of peace, no transport except elephants; and though on its reorganisation by Sir Hugh Rose, (Lord Strathnairn) in 1861, this error was avoided, the new transport was only calculated to meet the requirements of a force, whose duties were expected to be confined to the defence of the then existing frontiers of India, and to the maintenance of peace and tranquillity within those limits. The Sepoy Rebellion had thrown into such strong relief the additional dangers and difficulties which the British Garrison of India would have had to encounter, had the schemes of General Jacob been adopted and carried out by Lord Canning, that the statesmen and

commanders of the succeeding decade may well be excused for believing that the Forward Policy had received its death-blow, and for founding their military arrangements on that belief. If Sir Hugh Rose and the Government he served had foreseen that, in less than twenty years' time, the Indian army would be engaged in a second abortive attempt to establish British authority in Afghanistan, it is possible that they might have organized it on different lines; but no such cloud darkened for them the political horizon, and they set themselves to solve the military questions of their day, within the conditions under which they presented themselves, in full confidence that those conditions would not vary to any great extent

The strength of the Indian army on the 1st October, 1878,¹ differed but slightly² from what it had been in 1861, and the arrangements for rendering that army mobile were unchanged. Those arrangements were simple, inexpensive and effective. There was to be maintained at 43 cantonments, extending from Peshawar on the north to Trichinopoly on the south, and from Karachi on the west to Rangoon on the east, a supply of carriage, varying in kind and amount with the nature of the country, but, in each case, sufficient to permit of the mobilisation of a column for the prevention, or repression of disturbances in the district of which the cantonment was the military centre; and to make sure that this carriage should not be found

¹ Officers, 3,794; Men, 183,538; Horses, 82,172; Guns, 442.

² There had been an augmentation of about 4,500 men during the Abyssinian war.

wanting when the occasion for using it should occur, it was further directed that it was to be marched out of the station for a certain number of days in each year—a wise provision for efficiency which, after a time, was allowed to fall into disuse.

No means could have been better calculated to fulfil the purposes which Sir Hugh Rose had in view; but they did not lend themselves to the sudden mobilisation of a large transport train for use beyond the North-West Frontier. Setting aside the obvious fact that it was inexpedient to deprive any cantonment of the carriage which had been allotted to it, it is easy to see that only a small proportion of the whole was suited for service on the rough, steep roads and in the rigorous climate of Afghanistan, and the moving of camels by rail is, at all times, a costly and difficult undertaking.¹

The only existing transport, therefore, to which Lord Lytton could have looked for facilitating the advance of one, or more armies into Afghanistan, was that belonging to the military Stations on the North-West Frontier itself; and this, as we have seen, he had had to sacrifice to the requirements of the subordinate expeditions by which he hoped to pave the way for the occupation of the Kuram. The difficulty of replacing the transport thus expended would have been great under normal conditions of supply; and in India, after three famine years, those conditions were abnormal in the extreme. It was not only that where human workers had died by millions, the four-footed sharers of their toil had

¹ *Return, East India Army System. (Army Transport.) 1885.*

perished by hundreds of thousands,¹ but that those that had been preserved were, for the most part, so weakened by privation as to be unfit for the heavy labours of a peculiarly arduous campaign. But, fit or unfit, strong or feeble, immature or worn out,²—the Government, at its wits' end to move the forces it had pledged itself to put into the field, was obliged to purchase or hire every camel that the people of Sind and the Punjab could be induced to part with; and as double the number would have been required had grain been carried for those actually obtained, the military authorities decreed that some 60,000 of these luckless animals should live on what they could pick up along the narrowest and most barren tracks in the world.

Nor was the Indian army in much better case, as regarded the only kind of artillery which could be of much use to troops engaged in mountain warfare. In the whole of India

¹ "Cattle disease appeared in several districts of the Punjab during 1877-78, and was severely felt in some parts. There was, moreover, great loss of cattle, owing to the failure of the summer rains, and the consequent scarcity of fodder. In the Umballa district the deaths of cattle from starvation were estimated at *two-thirds of the stock of the district*, while in the Delhi and Hissar divisions, it was calculated that over 200,000 head died from the same cause."—Statement exhibiting Moral and Material Progress of India, 1877-78.

² Large numbers of the camels were mere colts, and, of the females, many were big with young. It is a notorious fact that whenever an order is issued to impress transport cattle for service beyond the frontier, the peasantry hide the best of their stock, or, by bribing the Native Transport Agents, induce them to content themselves with the weaklings.

there were only eight Mountain Batteries—two, of six guns each, manned by Europeans, and six, of four guns each, manned by Natives; and though, stored in the depôt of each native battery were two spare guns, with equipment and ammunition complete, the mules and men necessary for working them were lacking. To supplement these batteries—some of which had to be retained in India—Gatling guns were hastily despatched from England and forwarded, in equal haste, to the troops in the field; but when the cases containing them came to be opened, it was found that they had been sent out without duplicate parts, or the instruments needful for effecting repairs, and on being tested they proved to be quite unworkable. The Horse and Field batteries that were also sent up, were of little practical use except on the Kandahar side, and acted everywhere as a drag on the movements of the columns to which they were attached, even after their ammunition had been transferred from waggons to the backs of camels, packed in *scletahs*—canvas receptacles—improvised on the spot.¹ This same process of repacking had to be gone through with much of the rifle ammunition, which was sent to the front in big boxes quite unsuitable for mule carriage.²

The Medical Department was little less unfitted than the Transport Department for the strain to which it was about to be subjected. No special arrangements to meet the exig-

¹ The batteries were ill-provided with drag ropes and other appliances for helping the guns through the heavy desert tracts, and over the steep mountain paths.

² “*With the Kuram Field Force*”, p. 55, by Major J. A. S. Colquhoun, R.A

encies of mountain warfare had been devised for the conveyance of the sick. The bulk of the dhandies issued to the Native troops were of so flimsy a nature, that they broke down under the weight of a sepoy of ordinary size, and the measures adopted to strengthen them attained their end at the expense of the comfort of the poor fellows to whose lot it fell to use them; whilst the Looshai dhandies, of which a certain proportion were issued to both European and Native troops, though serviceable and comfortable enough when properly braced up, were too heavy to be carried by only four bearers. This same drawback of excessive weight attached to all the old-fashioned doolies; and there were only a small number of the newer and lighter Burke and Hamilton patterns in stock; and whether heavy or light, of faulty or good construction, the vast majority of both the dhandies and the doolies would have to be carried by hastily impressed bearers, who, being quite new to their work, must necessarily perform it under conditions equally unfavourable to themselves and to the sick. But unreadiness was not confined to matters of detail—even so important an administrative question as whether the General Field Hospital, or the Regimental Hospital System should be adopted in the coming war, being still in debate whilst the Multan Force was on its march to Quetta.¹

The paucity of British officers in the Native Army—the one blot on the Military System² as it had been settled in

¹ Report on the Medical Administration of the Afghan Campaign, by Surgeon-General Alexander Smith, M.D., C.B.

² When this system was inaugurated there was still a large

1861—rendered the efficient mobilization of the very considerable forces destined to be employed across the North-West Frontier, a difficult and delicate matter; for it was impossible either to send the selected corps into the field with their full tale of officers—only seven, including the surgeon—or to fill the numerous appointments in connection with the General Staff, and the Supply and Transport Departments which war temporarily creates, without drawing upon other regiments all over India, to an extent very injurious to their discipline and *moral*.

But a still more serious defect in the constitution of those forces was the large number of Pathans and Baluchis included in their ranks. These men are good fighters and, under ordinary circumstances, good soldiers; but to rely upon them in a campaign which was to be directed against their friends and kinsfolk, was to commit an act of over-confident folly.¹ Luckily the danger from this source was neutralized, in some degree, by the fact that the system of class regiments

number of unemployed officers whose regiments had mutinied and who were available to replace casualties. In 1878 this reserve, practically, no longer existed.

¹ General John Jacob, the able administrator of the Sind Frontier, had long before warned the Indian Government of the danger of enlisting Pathans and Baluchis. "Were I," he wrote in his volume of "Views and Opinions", published in 1858,—"were I proceeding on service against the tribes bordering on our frontier, I should consider the real strength of any force to be increased by the absence of such soldiers. They could not be trusted without immense risk of failure or disgrace."

Lord Lawrence, Sir William Mansfield and Sir Henry Norman had recorded similar opinions.

prevailing prior to the Mutiny, had been almost universally superseded by that of class companies and squadrons, which insured that a proportion of each regiment should be free from this natural taint of disaffection.

It results from this brief inquiry into the condition of India and her Military Forces in the year 1878, that Lord Lytton, so far from being able to claim for his policy the excuse of opportunity, lies open to the charge of having forced on an unjust and unnecessary war at a singularly unfavourable moment; and the only possible explanation of his perverse obstinacy is to be found in the fact, to which attention has repeatedly been called, that he entirely underestimated the resistance with which he would meet, and consequently the length of time that the struggle would endure. Ignorance of military matters and of the character and past conduct of the Afghan Tribes, may, perhaps, be pleaded in extenuation of the Viceroy's lack of judgment; but this only shifts the blame of his infatuation from his shoulders to those of the men, to whom he owed his false impressions of the situation with which he would have to cope.

Those men were *not* the Commander-in-Chief, nor the Military Member of Council. Neither Sir Frederick Haines nor Sir Samuel Browne was under any delusion as to the character of the Afghans, and the probability of their acquiescing tamely in an invasion of their country, or as to the ease and celerity with which their opposition to the British advance could be overcome; and from the moment that they clearly understood whither Lord Lytton's ambition was hurrying his Government, they steadily pressed the true facts of the situation upon his notice. Both were distinguished

soldiers of great experience, and the latter had an almost unique acquaintance with border matters and border races, having spent nearly his whole service in the Punjab Frontier Force; but these qualifications had as little weight with Lord Lytton as the official positions, in virtue of which they had the right to demand that their advice should be accepted in all that concerned the preparations for, and conduct of war.

The Viceroy's real counsellors, in military as in political matters, were his Private Secretary, Colonel George Pomeroy Colley; the Quarter-Master-General, Major-General Frederick Roberts; and the Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar, Major Louis Cavagnari; but though the military theories of the first agreed perfectly with the ambitious schemes of the two latter, and though all alike concurred in fostering the Viceroy's ignorant contempt for the dangers he was preparing to run—Roberts, whose whole life since the Mutiny, had been spent in the Quarter-Master-General's Department, who had filled the office of Deputy Quarter-Master-General for several years, and that of Quarter-Master-General for three, was in a far better position than a recent arrival in India like Colley, or a Political officer like Cavagnari, for judging of the fitness of the Indian Army for the task which they were seeking to impose upon it, and, to that extent, must be held to have been the more responsible of the three.

This official responsibility, however, he shares with the Adjutant-General, Major-General Peter Lumsden, and the Military Secretary to the Indian Government, Colonel H. K. Burne. The Departments over which these three officers presided, divided among them the control of all arrangements con-

nected with Intelligence, Plans of Operations, Mobilisation, Formation of Depôts, Movements of Troops, Supply and Transport, Followers, Ordnance, Clothing, Discipline and General Efficiency of the troops; and through one or other of them passed all the orders of Government and the Commander-in-Chief; and had the truth with regard to one and all of these important branches of the military service been laid before Lord Lytton, there can be no doubt, from what is known of his unwillingness to sanction the cost of making good the deficiencies of each, one by one, as they subsequently came to light, that he would have shrunk from the task of remedying the whole of their defects before giving the signal for hostilities, whilst it is not impossible that he might have refused to enter upon war with those defects unremedied.

The truth with regard to Transport, Ordnance, Medical equipment and arrangements and the constitution and health of the Native army has already been laid bare; and it only remains to show, in the present chapter, that the same inherent unfitness, or culpable unreadiness for the prosecution of aggressive war attached to all the arrangements connected with Intelligence, Followers, Clothing and Depôts; for the Plan of Campaign cannot be adequately considered till the Theatre of Operations has been described.

There was no lack of information bearing upon Afghanistan and its People in the possession of the Indian Military Authorities. The conditions under which a second Afghan war was to be prosecuted, were identical with those under which the first had been waged; and the pigeon-holes of the various Departments were filled with Reports in which the experiences of that prototype of all possible Afghan wars

were plainly chronicled. If it was too much trouble to go back to these, there was Colonel Charles Macgregor's Gazetteer which gave, in print and in the most convenient form, the very latest information with regard to all the routes connecting India with Central Asia, and the possibilities of supply along each. Had this work been made a text-book for the instruction of officers wishful to qualify for Staff employment beyond the Frontier, or for the duties of Transport and Commissariat Officers under conditions of which India furnished them with no example—a good deal would have been done to dissipate the dark cloud of ignorance which overshadowed the whole Afghan Question for most of those who were about to become actors in it. But the dust on the Afghan Reports remained undisturbed, and the Gazetteer was kept under lock and key, till, at the last moment, when the time for study had given place to the time for action, a few clerks were hurriedly set to work to copy out certain passages for distribution to the Staff Officers of the various columns.¹ But more surprising than this piece of stupid² official secretiveness, which has been defended on the

¹ If this Gazetteer could not be made public, there were other books from which useful information might have been obtained. "I have just secured Hough's Report on the progress of the Army of the Indus (1838), of which there is one copy in camp; and by snatches I have managed to read Lumsden's Mission to Kandahar. *Why the information in both these books has not been boiled down and circulated to officers is a mystery; a study of these reports would have saved us many mistakes.*"—"Kandahar in 1879", by Major A. le Messurier, R. F., Brigade Major.

² Stupid, because the Russian Central Staff Office at St. Peters-

ground that, if Englishmen were allowed free access to this rich source of knowledge, Russians might drink at the same fountain, is the fact that there were no maps of Afghanistan ready to be issued to the troops—not even to their commanders, one of whom, at least, recrossed the Frontier at the end of the first phase of the war without having set eyes on such a thing.¹

It required no study of Afghan history and geography, but merely an acquaintance with the ordinary facts of Indian military service to know that the proportion of followers to troops is as 10 to 11½; yet there were no stores of warm clothing and blankets waiting to be distributed to the thousands of poor wretches who were shortly to be torn from their homes to drive the camels, carry the sick, and generally minister to the wants of three armies, and no steps had been considered for providing those thousands with adequate shelter. In the matter of warm clothing, all the transport animals, and many of the troops were to fare no better than the

burg contained in 1878 most accurate and exhaustive intelligence regarding the military strength and topography of Afghanistan, detailed information being given of all routes traversing the country and leading into India. Even had this not been so, all the knowledge in the world could not lessen the difficulties in the way of a Russian occupation of Afghanistan; besides, it is as true in war as in whist, that it is better to inform one's partner than to keep one's adversary in the dark—the partner in this case, being the whole body of British officers in the Anglo-Indian army, from whom the Departments withheld knowledge essential to the right discharge of their duties.

¹ Sir Frederick Maude.

followers, whole regiments marching to Kandahar in scanty underclothing and cotton coats; whilst on the Kandahar and Kuram sides, the Native soldiers were insufficiently supplied with tents.

With a view to an early advance on Kandahar, Quetta had been occupied in the autumn of 1876, but by so weak a force that, as we have seen, the first act of the Commander-in-Chief, after the repulse of the Chamberlain Mission, was to hurry off troops to its assistance; and although the distance between the new outpost and the nearest British Cantonment of any importance—Multan—by the shortest road, exceeded 500 miles, no depôts of provisions and fodder were established along this, or any other route; in fact, in the whole of Baluchistan, the only preparation for the coming struggle—viz., the collection of *boosa* (chopped straw), grain and sheepskin coats at Quetta—was undertaken by Major Sandeman on his own initiative. Neither was any attempt made to prepare for the march of troops through Baluchistan, by improving the water supply at the different halting-places, and by enlarging and clearing the old camping-grounds; and Sir Andrew Clarke's¹ recommendation, to lay a line of railway across the desert from Sukkur to Dadar, though strongly supported by Sir S. Browne, was rejected by the Government of which both were members.

There are two plausible, but mutually destructive explanations of the wholesale neglect of precautions and preparations which the facts just adduced attest—it may be urged either that Shere Ali's refusal to permit a British Mission to visit

¹ *Public Works Member of Council.*

Kabul, at the time and in the manner dictated by Lord Lytton, took the Indian Government and the military authorities by surprise, or that, long confidently anticipating an outbreak of hostilities, they thought it wise to abstain from measures which would have revealed those anticipations to the outside world, and have put the Amir on his guard. It is impossible, however, to accept either plea. Some military authorities, some members of the Indian Government may have been ignorant enough of the aims and illusions which were working to bring about a rupture between Great Britain and Afghanistan, to be astonished when it became apparent that war was imminent; but the Viceroy who shaped those aims and nourished those illusions, knew well whither events were tending—knew it from the day when the first attempt to put Lord Salisbury's Instructions into force, revealed the unchangeable nature of the Afghan spirit of independence; and men who took care, by threats in the Conference Chamber, and by military and political action on the Frontier, to leave Shere Ali in no doubt as to what those ends really were, and their determination to attain them, are debarred from pleading diplomatic caution in excuse of departmental carelessness and indifference.

CHAPTER XV

THE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS AND THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

To follow intelligently the history of any campaign, a preliminary acquaintance with what, in military parlance, is termed *the theatre of operations*, is indispensable. This knowledge is, however, doubly essential where the nature of the country in which the war to be studied was waged, and the character of the approaches to that country, were such as to exercise a far stronger influence on the movements of the attacking force, than the counter-movements of the regular army, opposing its advance. Owing to its physical and climatic peculiarities, the region now about to become the theatre of operations in a second Afghan war, offers enormous difficulties to the progress of forces equipped with all modern military appliances. Bounded on the North, by the Kabul river; on the West, by the Hazara Mountains and the river Helmand; on the South, by Baluchistan; on the East, by the Indus—this region, in shape an irregular four-sided figure, contains about 200,000 square miles, an area rather larger than that of France; and, within it, can be experienced every variety of climate, from torrid heat to almost arctic cold. It may be roughly divided into three zones—desert, mountain, and high table-land. The first, a strip of country varying in width from fifty to one hundred and sixty miles, lies either within British territory, or in the

territory of a British ally, the Khan of Khelat; the second is occupied by independent tribes, whose neutrality, or aid, Lord Lytton hoped to purchase; in the third, stand the few cities of Afghanistan, the only points where coercion can be successfully applied to the ruler of that country.

The war, then, as Lord Lytton conceived of it, was to begin in the, to him, improbable event of the Amir's power surviving the loss of his advanced positions in the Khyber and the Kuram, at from 180 to 300 miles beyond the Indian frontier, according to the route taken by the different forces. In reality, it began as soon as that frontier was crossed, and except by the Khyber route, the difficulties of the undertaking developed much earlier; for the march from Rawalpindi to Thal, and that from Multan to the Indus, lay through rough and barren country; the transfer of troops with their camp-followers, guns, horses, elephants, baggage, and stores, from the left to the right bank of that river was a tremendous business, even in the cold weather, when its stream was confined to a channel 1,500 yards wide, and there were bridges of boats at Attock and Khushalgarh, and little steamers at Dera Ghazi Khan and Sukkur to facilitate the crossing; whilst the desert was to prove a still greater obstacle to the advance of the two divisions whose objective was Kandahar. There are few paths across that desert, each strictly marked out by wells and pools, and in those days when there was no railway to Dadar, the distance between one well, or pool, and another—an interval in several instances of sixteen, in one of twenty-six and a half miles—determined the length of a day's march; whilst the amount of water which the shallowest among them yielded in the

twenty-four hours, fixed the number of men who could be despatched from the original starting-point day by day; a number so small, that the Bengal column of the Army of the Indus, consisting of only 9,500 men, which marched from Shikarpur to the Bolan in 1839, had to be broken up into eight detachments; the cavalry, into half regiments.

Nor is want of water this region's worst feature:—To quote the words of one who had a terrible personal experience of its dangers. '—"The heat in this part of the world is more deadly than the sword of a human enemy. Dust storms occur frequently at all seasons of the year, sometimes changing the light of mid-day to an intensity of darkness to which no ordinary night ever approaches; and this darkness, in severe storms, lasts one, two, or more hours. These dust storms are sometimes accompanied by a blast of the simoon, a poisonous wind which is equally destructive to vegetable and animal life."'

¹ General John Jacob.

² In June 1839, when the thermometer in the hospital at Sukkur stood at 130°, for several days at 140°, and one day at 143°, and the wind at midnight seemed like a blast from a furnace, Jacob and Lieutenant Cory of Her Majesty's 17th regiment, with forty European soldiers, marched from Sukkur to Shikarpur. On the first day's march of ten miles, seven of the men were struck dead by the sun, and four others with Lieutenant Cory, were sent back to Sukkur, all of whom died on the return journey, or the following day in hospital. On the second day's march, four more deaths occurred. About the same time, a wing of the 23rd Bombay Infantry, marching from Shikarpur in charge of treasure and stores, lost all its British officers; and in another detachment, a Native officer and nine sepoy died in one day

Rising abruptly from the desert, begins the series of wild mountain ranges, pressing one upon another like waves of a petrified sea, where deep and narrow defiles, the homes of stifling heat, cholera and fever, alternate with high passes where, in winter, the temperature falls constantly below zero : defile and pass being alike destitute of food, forage and fuel. Five routes—the Khyber, the Kuram, the Gumal, the Thal Chotiali and the Bolan—run through these rugged wastes. Of these, the two former lead direct to Kabul; the two latter, to Kandahar; and the Gumal, to Ghazni, the central city of Afghanistan, situated on the road which connects the other two. All are difficult; all, unhealthy; but the Khyber route possesses the undoubted advantages of being the shortest, the only one practicable at all seasons of the year, and of starting from the very gates of Peshawar, the city which is the base of supply for the troops making use of it; whereas hundreds of miles separate the eastern end of the Bolan, the Thal Chotiali and the Gumal from their base—Multan; and the entrance of the Kuram Valley route is 150 miles distant from its base—Rawal Pindi.

Of these four routes, the Bolan is, after the Khyber, the main commercial and military road between India and Afghanistan; partly, as affording the best approach to Kandahar and Herat, and, partly, as lying nearest to the ports of the Indian Ocean. The depth of the mountain zone at this point is about 120 miles, and, of this distance, one half is the single defile which gives its name to the entire route. The path through this narrow gorge follows closely the bed of the stream, which turns in the rains, or during the melting of the snows, to a roaring rushing torrent,

sweeping all before it, and rendering the camping-grounds on its banks unfit for occupation. Those camping grounds are few, very restricted in extent, and owing to the fact that they are used, year after year, by the Kafilas on their way to and from India, their sanitary condition is always extremely bad. By this route, the limits of time during which military operations can be conducted, are determined by the desert, which stamps it as a winter road; whereas the Kuram, the third of the routes selected by Lord Lytton as a line of advance for British troops, is, on account of the great height of the Shutargardan Pass—11,500 feet—a summer road only. Under ordinary circumstances, the folly of prosecuting a war by lines which can only be used alternately, must strike even persons ignorant of strategy; but where, owing to the immense distances separating those lines, and the absence of all lateral communications between them, the forces using them can be of no service to each other, the question of summer and winter roads fails, naturally enough, to attract attention. It was not *one* war but *three* wars that were about to begin; and it mattered little whether they were all waged together, or one at a time.

To the Afghan mountains succeeds the Afghan Plateau—a somewhat misleading term; for this great stretch of country, 400 miles long, and from 100 to 200 miles wide, is not one big table-land, but a series of plains, rising by uneven steps from Kandahar on the south, and Kabul on the north, towards Ghazni, and broken by numerous ranges of hills, which push up from them to a height varying from 1,000 to 6,000 feet. The Kabul end of this so-called plateau is 6,500 feet; the Kandahar end, 3,500 feet; and its highest

part near Ghazni, 8,000 feet above the sea level. The Ghazni Highlands are the watershed of this region, sending its drainage, north-east, into the Kabul river, and, south-west, into the rivers Arghastan, Tarnak, and Arghandab, which, after mingling their waters, flow into the Helmand, and perish with it in the desert of Seistan. All Afghan rivers flow, for the greater part of their course, through deep ravines, and, consequently, are, in general, useless for irrigating purposes; and when, as in the case of the streams above named, they rise to the level of the surrounding country, and become wider and more sluggish, the evaporation from them is so great that they can fertilize only a narrow strip of land on either bank; and the whole country, however much it may differ in its other features, has this in common, that little or no addition can ever be made to its cultivated lands. These vary in extent, in productiveness, and in the nature of their crops. The lofty, pine-clad mountains of the Kingdom of Kabul, enclose little valleys and glens where fruit and vegetables grow in profusion, and where a small amount of cereals are raised. The Ghazni district also grows fruit; but its chief products are wheat and barley, with which, after providing for their own needs, the inhabitants supply those of the capital. The Province of Kandahar is either desert, or high pasture land, browsed by the sheep of the nomadic tribes, who live almost exclusively on their flesh. Famines—with their accompaniment—pestilence, are of frequent occurrence in Afghanistan;¹ and, in the best seasons, the country

¹ Dr. Bellew, in his *Journal of a Political Mission in Afghanistan*, tells us of one which he witnessed in Kandahar in the year

only just supports its population, and exports no food stuffs except fruit and a little honey.

As regards the population of the future theatre of operations,—that portion of it which was under the rule of Shere Ali contained about 4,500,000 inhabitants; and about 1,500,000 were scattered throughout Baluchistan and the territories of the Independent Afghan Tribes. Little or no cohesion existed among these peoples; not even among the clans recognising the sovereignty of the Amir;¹ and the direct authority of that prince was little felt outside the cities occupied by his regular troops. The chief difference between the tribes on the two sides of an ill-defined frontier, consisted in the fact that one set paid tribute to the Kabul Government, and the other was subsidised by

1857:—"Whilst traversing the filthy lanes of the city we had full and painful proof of the sufferings of the people from the combined effects of scarcity and pestilence... This terrible pestilence and famine continued with unabated severity for fully six weeks after our arrival, and the daily scenes of hideous suffering we encountered on our way to the open country proved a most painful ordeal... The sufferings and privations of the Kandaharis during this famine were really terrible... We had considerable difficulty in feeding our horses and baggage animals, and for several days could get no grain whatever, and but small supplies of fodder. The price of barley was four seers the rupee, wheat flour sold at two seers the rupee... At such prices, the poor could get no flour at all, and for several months subsisted on clover and lucern, wild herbs and mulberry leaves which they as often ate uncooked as cooked."

¹ It is probable that Abdur Rahman exercises stricter sway over his subjects than Shere Ali ever pretended to enforce.

it.¹ In the Kingdom of Afghanistan, omitting the province of Turkestan, which lay outside the theatre of operations, several distinct races dwell side by side. The Tajiks, numbering about 500,000 souls, and the Kizzelbashis, numbering about 200,000 are both of Persian origin, and speak that tongue; but the former belong to the Sunni, the latter, to the Shiah branch of the Mahomedan religion; and whilst the first are addicted to agricultural pursuits, the second are, for the most part, physicians, merchants, and traders. Both enlist freely in the regular army; the bulk of the cavalry and artillery, in 1878, being Kizzelbashis. The 50,000 Hazaras living in Afghanistan proper, though also a Persian-speaking people, are of Tartar descent. Their stronghold is in the mountains of the same name, which they have always defended with extraordinary bravery; but the poverty of their home drives many of the able-bodied men to seek work elsewhere, and they are found scattered over the country as farm labourers and domestic servants. The 300,000 Hindus settled in Afghanistan transact all the banking business of the country, and hold its chief trade in their hands; and though, as aliens and infidels, they labour under many restrictions and disabilities, they are not actively persecuted, and appear to prosper.²

The 300,000 Jats—Mahomedans of the Sunni Sect, generally supposed to be the aboriginal inhabitants of the land—

¹ Many of the Independent Tribes once subsidised by the Amir of Kabul are now under British Sovereignty.

² According to Dr. Bellew, they occupy in the Afghan cities a position analogous to that of the Heathen in the cities of Israel.

earn their livelihood as farm servants, barbers, musicians etc., whilst 150,000 Kafirs, Kashmiris, Armenians, and other aliens inhabit Kabul and its neighbourhood, some settled on the land, others engaged in commerce. The 3,000,000 true Afghans—all speaking Pushtu, all belonging to the Sunni Sect—are divided by their mode of life into nomadic and settled tribes, the former, who are found chiefly in Khorassan, are tent dwellers, migrating with their families and flocks of camels and sheep from one place to another in search of pasture. The latter, constituting the bulk of the nation, form the village communities, and to some extent, the population of the towns. As a rule, they are the owners of land, which they either cultivate themselves or employ hired labourers to cultivate for them. They are the chief carriers of the country, but petty trade of all kinds they eschew. From them the infantry of the standing army is chiefly recruited.

Whether nomadic or settled in his habits, whether a subject of the Amir, or the member of an Independent Tribe, the Afghan bears an evil reputation. According to Dr. Bellew, who knew him well, “he is vain, bigoted in religious matters and national or tribal prejudices, revengeful of real or imaginary injuries, avaricious and penurious in the extreme, prone to deception which they fail to conceal, and wanting in courage and perseverance. . . . They are, moreover, by nature and profession, a race of robbers, and never fail to practise this peculiarly national calling on any and every opportunity. Among themselves, finally, the Afghans are quarrelsome, intriguing, and distrustful of each other, and by neighbouring nations they are considered faithless

and intractable.”¹ But Elphinstone’s account of the same people is more pleasing. “A traveller,” he wrote, “would find it difficult to comprehend how a nation could subsist in such disorder, and would pity those who were compelled to pass their days in such a scene, and whose minds were trained by their unhappy situation to fraud and violence, to rapine, deceit and revenge. Yet he would scarce fail to admire their martial and lofty spirit, their hospitality, and their bold and simple manners, equally removed from the suppleness of a citizen and the awkward rusticity of a clown; and he would, probably, before long, discover among so many qualities that excited his disgust, the rudiments of many virtues.”²

As is natural among men living always on the edge of starvation, the normal condition of the Afghan peoples is one of internecine strife; nevertheless, there is one passion common to all, which has proved itself strong enough to bring them, temporarily, into line—namely, hatred of the Kafir—the infidel stranger, who should threaten their turbulent independence, or tempt their poverty by the sight of convoys of provisions and arms, toiling slowly along their difficult roads. And, on their mountain sides, under their own leaders, fighting in order so loose that they can scatter and disappear in the twinkling of an eye, to reappear and reform with equal celerity—the Afghans are formidable foes; and their martial qualities make of them good soldiers

¹ *Journal of a Mission to Afghanistan in 1857.*

² To these two writers I am chiefly indebted for my account of the peoples of Afghanistan

in the ranks of a well-disciplined, well-led regular army. Shere Ali's visit to India, in 1869, had shown him the value of such an army, and to its creation he had devoted, year after year, nearly a fourth of the whole revenue of his kingdom, with fair success so far as its numbers, arms and equipment were concerned.¹

¹ The following was the estimated strength of the Amir's Regular Army in 1878:—

72 Battalions of Infantry 50,000

25 Regiments of Cavalry 10,000

A special militia who were in receipt of a small salary and enjoyed other privileges, numbered:—

Infantry 60,000

Cavalry 95,000

Besides the above there was a general levy; every adult male inhabitant being expected to take up arms at a moment's notice, a call which they obeyed with remarkably alacrity. In the first Afghan war it was estimated that one-eighth of the entire population were at one time under arms.—Records in the Russian Central Staff-Office at St. Petersburg

Mr. G. Hensman, in his *Afghan War, 1879-80* gives the following details regarding the armament of the Amir's forces in 1878:—

English Siege Train (Elephant)	6
Cabuli " "	10
" " " (Bullock)	18
Horsed guns	{ Breech loaders 89 }	145
	{ Brass guns 56 }	
Mountain guns	{ Breech loaders 6 }	150
	{ Muzzle " 48 }	
	{ Brass " 96 }	
Various small guns of position.	50
Total ..		379

But it lacked the first essential of an organised military force—an intelligent, energetic and highly educated body of officers—and it was, consequently, to play a far smaller part in the coming struggle than the Tribal Militia, in which every male subject of the Amir, between the ages of sixteen and sixty, was enrolled.

It was easy to foresee that the natural characteristics of the inhabitants of Afghanistan, coupled with the absence of all surplus food along the different lines of advance, must greatly affect the movements of the British invaders. Large quantities of provisions for man and beast must, necessarily, accompany each force, greatly retarding progress. Convoy

Number of Rifles entered in the Government books as having been issued to the troops:—

English Sniders	5,000
„ Enfields	15,000
„ Rifled Carbines	1,200
Brunswick Rifles	1,400
Tower Muskets	1,000
Cavalry Pistols	1,045
Cabuli Sniders...	2,189
„ Enfields	8,212
„ Rifled Carbines	589
Kandahar Enfields	453
Herati „	516
Various kinds for Cavalry (double-barrelled etc.) ..	1,553
Smooth bores (probably many Tower Muskets)	1,418
Flint Muskets	1,300
Total .	49,875

The manufacture of gunpowder was entrusted to contractors, and in war-time, doubtless, a ton of powder could have been supplied every day, as long as funds were forthcoming

after convoy would have to follow, to ensure whose safety ever lengthening lines of communication must be strongly held. Attempts might be made to buy the neutrality of the Natives, but, divided as they were into numerous tribes and sub-tribes, rendering scant obedience to their chiefs, or recognising rival claimants to the office of Head-man, no reliance could be placed upon agreements concluded with them, and incessant vigilance would have to be practised against nominal allies, no less than against open enemies. Such vigilance, extending over long distances and maintained under most trying climatic conditions, drains the strength of an army, and wears away its spirit and temper.

Under these circumstances, what ought to have been the aim of the Indian Authorities when they sat down to settle the best way of punishing Shere Ali for the affront suffered by the British Mission? Clearly, to diminish to the utmost the opportunities of friction with the Independent Tribes. Instead of *three lines of advance*, each giving birth to its own swarms of ubiquitous, intangible, troublesome foes, and calling for three armies and three sets of transport, commissariat and hospital arrangements—one *line of advance* should have been adopted, and the choice of that one, political considerations should have decided. If territorial aggrandisement was held to be the fittest satisfaction for wounded British honour, 10,000 men could have driven the Amir's troops across the Shutargardan, and have permanently annexed the Kuram. If the object desired was to keep Russia at arm's length by going half way to meet her, then 25,000 men could have occupied Kandahar, and effectually over-awed the tribes along the road. But if the

blow was to be dealt direct at the offender himself, the Khyber line was the one to select, for, by this, a like force—10,000 men to do the work and 15,000 to hold their communications—might have taken his capital, broken up his army, destroyed his stores of arms and ammunition, and marched back again to India between the beginning of February and the end of April.¹ For the execution of any one of these schemes there was ample transport procurable in India, without the necessity of starving it by the way; and two additional months devoted to preparations would have sent the troops into the field thoroughly equipped at all points; whilst none but regiments in good health need have been employed. In this way, we should have come into contact with the tribes along one route only, in dealing with whom much annoyance and waste of time might have been saved by substituting for unsatisfactory negotiations a simple proclamation of our aims and intentions, backed up by a display of force too great for the Afridis, or Ghilzais to venture on opposing, or harassing, our movements, and by a scrupulous avoidance of all conduct likely to irritate and annoy men whom it was not our interest to convert into foes:—conduct, such as the sending of expeditions off the main road to pry into the secrets of, hitherto, unvisited valleys. Such a definite, limited plan of campaign would have reduced to a minimum the expense and risks of the war, and must, certainly, have attained the aim

¹ Since those days many conditions in the problem of an invasion of Afghanistan have changed; and it is probable that a much larger force would now be required, even for a temporary occupation of Kabul

that its authors had in view; whereas, the plan adopted, which embraced, in a half-hearted, uncertain sort of way, the three schemes between which a choice should have been made, imposed a maximum of sacrifice on India and her army, with no result save the confused and weary fighting recorded in the second volume of this history. That plan threw one army into the Kuram and another into the Khyber, at the beginning of winter, under instructions not to press forward to Kabul; and sent a third force to demonstrate at Kandahar, dragging with it heavy cannon for the capture of Herat, a city which it was too weak ever to dream of approaching.

CHAPTER XVI

THE QUETTA REINFORCEMENTS AND THE MULTAN FIELD FORCE.

THE Quetta reinforcements, to the command of which Major-General Michael A. S. Biddulph, C.B.,¹ had been appointed, were drawn from various quarters:—

E. Battery, 4th Brigade Royal Artillery, the 70th Foot, the 19th Bengal Infantry and a company of Sappers and Miners from Multan; the 26th Bengal Infantry from Mian Mir; the 1st Punjab Cavalry from Dera Ghazi Khan;² the 2nd Punjab Cavalry from Rajanpur; the Sind Frontier Force from Jacobabad; and the 27th and 29th Bombay

¹ Michael Anthony Sharpnel Biddulph, born in 1823, entered the army in 1843, and served with distinction in the Crimea. He had seen no active service in India, but had filled several important posts in that country, and had acquired a considerable knowledge of native character. That he had no personal acquaintance with the service conditions of the land into which he was about to penetrate, was a disadvantage which he shared with too many officers, and, if this ignorance, in the early part of the war, led him into some mistakes, especially into expecting more from his troops than, under those conditions, they could possibly perform, he was quick to see his errors and resourceful in repairing them.

² This regiment was temporarily replaced at Dera Ghazi Khan by the 8th Bengal Cavalry from Multan, thus leaving the latter station without any garrison.

Infantry, and No. 2 Bombay Mountain Battery from the Bombay Presidency.

Starting from different points, the various corps were to cross the desert as separate units, except the 70th, the Battery of Royal Artillery and the company of Sappers and Miners who, under the immediate command of the General, were to march together to Dadar by the Dera Bughti route, which had been adopted as the shortest road from Multan to Quetta, in spite of the fact that no British troops had hitherto ever made use of it, and that Captain North, R.E., who traversed it with a company of Sappers, in 1876, had reported it to be impassable for guns and very badly supplied with water. That, under such circumstances, it should have been selected by the military authorities as the line of march for a British regiment and a battery of artillery, is the best proof that those authorities could have given of their deep sense of the dangers to which the small garrison at Quetta was exposed.¹ These troops left Multan, in advance of their leader, on the 25th September, and bivouacked for the night at Sher Shah, where a steamer and a number of flat-bottomed country-boats were waiting to convey them, their camp-followers, guns, cattle, camels, baggage and stores, to the right bank of the Chenab. The river being in flood, the passage occupied two days; and the hard work and the exposure to the sun told so severely upon men weakened already by a summer spent in one of the hottest stations in India, that, on the

¹ The first 45 miles of the alternative route by Sukkur and Dadar were still closed by the Indus floods.

second day, a considerable number had to be sent back sick to Multan.

Crossing the Indus, four days later, proved an equally tedious operation; and on the march from Dera Ghazi Khan to Rajanpur—a distance of seventy-eight miles—with the surging river on one hand, and the burning desert on the other, the hospitals began to fill in a very ominous manner. All the more welcome, therefore, was the cool shade of Rajanpur, when that pretty, bowery little station was reached on the 13th October; and the week spent in its shady avenues, waiting for the arrival of the General and his Staff, worked a most satisfactory change in the health of the Force.

Biddulph had arrived in Multan, on the 8th October, to learn that his troops had left that station very poorly equipped, and he spent some days there in trying to make good the more serious deficiencies. But very little was to be procured locally, and the arsenal of Firozpur, the base of supply for all troops moving on Kandahar, not being in railway communication with Multan, it would have taken too long for his indents on that place to be complied with. Leaving, therefore, Captain W. G. Nicholson, R. E., to organise an Engineers' Park, for which no provision had as yet been made, with orders to follow him as quickly as possible,¹ the General embarked, on the 13th October, on

¹ Nicholson rejoined Biddulph at Quetta in November, bringing with him a mule train which he had formed with remarkable celerity, and loaded up with entrenching tools, implements for blasting operations, and large quantities of cordage and hauling ropes, which proved quite invaluable.

one of the river steamers, accompanied by Major G. B. Wolseley, Assistant Adjutant-General, Captain H. B. Hanna, Quarter-Master-General's Staff, and Captain W. S. S. Bisset, Field-Engineer, and taking with him such stores and commissariat supplies as he had been able to collect. Mithankot, a village twelve miles south of Rajanpur, just below the confluence of the Chenab and the Indus, where, at this time, there was talk of throwing a bridge over the latter river, for the convenience of the column that was to follow in the wake of the Quetta reinforcements, was reached on the 16th. Here the General and his Staff mounted horses that were in waiting for them, and rode to Rajanpur, where four busy days were spent in completing the arrangements for the desert march and the advance through the Bolan Pass to the Highlands of Quetta, where, as they well knew, they should find winter already begun. No zeal and forethought, however, could compensate for the lack of articles of the first necessity; and they had to submit to the mortification and anxiety of seeing the 70th enter on its long march with no clothing save the cotton coats and trousers in which they had left Multan, and of knowing that the camp-followers were in still more pitiable case. Fortunately, the night before the march began, a consignment of blankets intended for Quetta arrived by steamer at Rajanpur, on which, notwithstanding the protest of the commissariat officer in charge of the convoy, the Assistant Quarter-Master-General at once laid hands for distribution to these unhappy creatures; a proceeding for which he had afterwards to account to the Military Authorities at Head Quarters, who were, however, sensible enough to perceive that to employ trans-

port to carry up these coverings to Quetta, when hundreds of human beings were in danger of dying for want of them, would have been a cruel waste both of camels and blankets. The only thing to be regretted was the consignment's not being large enough to provide rugs for the transport animals also.

On the 20th October the troops bade farewell to Rajanpur, and plunged into the desert, moving with all military precautions, as if in the presence of an enemy. The first two marches were short, and the road fairly practicable, but, on the third day, the difficulties of the route were encountered in full force. To avoid the worst heat, the camp broke up from Lalgoshi long before dawn; but the progress of the column, hampered not only by its baggage and by a month's supply of all food, down to grain for the horses and cattle, but also by the charge of a large commissariat convoy and of a drove of horned cattle to be consumed *en route*—was so slow that, when the sun rose crimson above the horizon, shedding a ruddy light over the desert, the next halting-place, Bandowali, was still miles away. With the sun came a curious phenomenon; hundreds of fickle little winds flickered about in every direction, carrying up with them, high in air, slender columns of hot sand, which waltzed and whirled, and rose and sank as if invisible sprites were engaged in a great top-spinning contest. After a while, these died away, to be succeeded by dense clouds of sand which completely enveloped the moving mass of men and animals, filling mouth and nostrils, eyes and ears, with fine sharp dust. Through rents in these clouds, the figures of the camels, viewed at a distance, grew strangely elongated

broken and spectral; and, on the far horizon, great reaches of calm water mocked the thirst of man and beast; for the contents of the pakhals¹ had been consumed in the stifling night hours, or had gradually leaked away. As the sun rose higher and higher in the cloudless sky, man after man fell senseless, or gasping, to the ground. The wearied horses and bullocks could scarcely pull the guns and wagons through the soft, deep sand, though men, equally wearied, hauled at the drag-ropes, or literally, put their shoulders to the wheel; only the camels, children of the desert, plodded patiently and unconcernedly along. It was two o'clock in the afternoon when the main body reached the little fort of Bandowali, held by a detachment of the Frontier Cavalry, having taken ten hours in marching sixteen miles. A few spare camels and the tired hospital carriage, after depositing the sick, had to go back to pick up, one by one, the men who had fallen by the way, and it was five p.m. before the rear-guard marched in.² The same evening, the General, who had been detained by business at Rajanpur, overtook the Force, and gave orders that it should spend the following day in rest, preparatory to facing a still more formidable march, there being no water and, consequently, no halting-place between Bandowali and Kabradani, a distance of twenty-three miles. With Biddulph came the Political Officer to his

¹Leathern bags made out of bullock hides; they were quite new, unseasoned and very leaky.

²Throughout that trying day, all the officers, though suffering severely themselves, did their best to cheer and help the men; but Dr. M. Knox of the 70th, always energetic and devoted, surpassed himself in his unwearied attention to the sick.

Force, Mr. F. Fryer,¹ Deputy Commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan, and three Baluchi chiefs—Nawab Iman Buksh, Nawab Jemal Khan, and Sirdar Miram Khan. The Political Officer, whose knowledge of the Baluchi tribes was second only to Sandeman's, proved of great assistance to the Force, and the three Chiefs, who, in consequence of possessing land both in Sind and Baluchistan, had great influence over the border tribes, rendered priceless service to the British cause.²

The 23rd was an anxious day for the General and his officers, both staff and regimental. It was not only that they had to prepare for an exceptionally long march, and that the road was reported to be very heavy and cut by several stony nullahs, but that, in addition to the sick in hospital, there were a hundred men of the 70th regiment unable to walk, and the artillery horses and draught bullocks were in an exhausted condition. It was therefore clear that unless some means could be found to relieve the latter and to increase the amount of carriage at the disposal of the troops, the march must end in a disaster.

A commissariat convoy, as has been mentioned, accompanied the Force; this, Biddulph now broke up, handing over the provisions and all extra baggage to Nawab Iman Buksh—who undertook to convey them safely to Quetta, and faithfully performed what he had promised—and appropriating the camels partly to the use of the sick and

¹ Now Sir Frederick Fryer, Lieutenant-Governor of Burma

² Months later, Biddulph wrote of these chiefs:—"They have thrown in all the power of their influence to assist us, and this they have done with a steadiness of purpose and an ability which merit the highest consideration and praise."

footsore, and partly for the carriage of the ammunition, which was transferred from four of the wagons to hastily improvised canvas bags. The wagons themselves were placed in the fort; the bullocks that had drawn them being thus set free to lighten the labours of their fellows attached to the wagons that were still to accompany the Force. The arrangement, especially that part of it which gave the future food supply of the Quetta garrison into the hands of the Chief of what had but very recently been a robber tribe, would have been unjustifiable had the pressure of circumstances been less urgent; but as General Biddulph's choice lay between this act of supreme trust and the collapse of the expedition, he deserves only praise for having conceived the plan and boldly carried it through.

At 8 p.m. on the 24th, the column moved off once more, the Battery leading, escorted by 200 picked men of the 70th Regiment. The night was pitch dark, and there were no lanterns to throw light on the inequalities of the hummocky, undulating ground. The loose, deep sand slipped and slid beneath the hoofs of the struggling horses and swallowed up the wheels of the gun-carriages and wagons to the very axle-trees, and at the end of the first mile the whole Force had to halt whilst the battery force was being extricated. To save unnecessary fatigue and exposure, the order of march was now reversed, the main body of the infantry and all the sick being placed in front and bidden make the best of their way to Kabradani. The General and his Staff remained with the Battery which, for a time, toiled painfully on. Again and again, first one wagon and then another stuck fast, and the horses had to be sent back to

the assistance of the bullocks; whilst the desperate straining of the poor beasts often broke the harness, and much time was lost in effecting repairs.

At sunrise, after ten hours of incessant and killing toil in which only nine miles had been accomplished, the General halted the wagons, and leaving a small detachment of infantry, a few gunners and some of the Baluchi guides to guard them, rode on with his Staff to Kabradani, where his first care was to send back food and water to the men whom he had left behind. About 2 p.m. the guns came crawling painfully in, and when the teams had been fed, watered and rested, they were sent back to bring in the wagons, which arrived safely next day.

After the experience of the 24th and 25th of October, there were no more night marches, and the column was split up into three bodies which advanced at the distance of a march apart:—First, the Head-Quarters with an escort; then, the 70th Regiment; last, the Field Battery and the Sappers and Miners.

The character of the country now began to change, wild, stony ridges taking the place of the flat, sandy desert. The rough, jagged, flint-strewn track running through these hills tore and bruised the feet of the bullocks and transport animals, and much labour had to be expended on it before it could be made practicable for the guns. The days and nights were still oppressively hot, but there was a slight touch of crispness in the air at dawn. The scenery was magnificent, especially at sunrise and sunset, when the stony valleys were filled with golden light and the hill tops stood out rose-coloured against the cloudless sky; but the beauty

was terrible in its loneliness and silence; nowhere was there a sign of animal or vegetable life—no house, no tree, no hum of insect, no twitter of bird.¹

The country through which the Force was now marching belonged to the Dera Bughtis, a tribe whose raiding propensities had made them equally troublesome to the British authorities in Sind, and to their nominal sovereign the Khan of Khelat. Adjoining the Dera Bughti territory, a few marches to the north-east of Biddulph's line of advance, were the lands of the Marris, a tribe which in the first Afghan war had distinguished itself as much by the vigour of the opposition offered by it to the invading army, whose regular troops it more than once defeated, as by its chivalrous generosity in its hour of triumph. Since the year 1875, the Indian Government had dealt with these tribes independently of the Khan of Khelat, and by granting them a substantial subsidy and encouraging them to enlist in the Frontier Force, had gained a considerable influence over them, of which Biddulph was now to receive the proof, for on his arrival at Songsila, the chief village of the Bughtis, he found a number of chiefs assembled to receive him and profuse in offers of assistance, which were well kept till the disaster at Maiwand in 1880 proved too strong a strain on their new-born loyalty to British rule.

At Lehri, Biddulph overtook the 1st Punjab Cavalry,

¹ These ridges are intersected in places by wide nullahs in which, after rain, water flows and grass springs up; but as the whole rainfall of the district is little more than an inch per annum, the vegetation is but skin deep and dies quickly away.

which had started some days before his column, but had lost itself in the desert,¹ and a detachment of that regiment under Captain Corrie Bird was added to the General's escort, Bird remaining on the Staff for the remainder of the campaign.

On the 31st October, the Head Quarters arrived at Dadar, a town of some size for Baluchistan, and during the campaign an important link in the line of communications between Quetta and the Indus. It lies three miles to the south-east of the mouth of the Bolan, on the river of the same name, or rather, on one of the channels into which that stream breaks up on issuing from the mountains. At certain seasons these fill and overflow, making cultivation, on a limited scale, possible; but they are dry for so large a part of the year that the town has to depend for water upon tanks and wells, which yield none that is not brackish and unwholesome. According to Thornton, the lexicographer, "its heat probably exceeds that of any other place on earth in the same parallel of latitude;" a fact which its situation—shut in on three sides by bare rocky hills and open on the fourth to the desert—fully explains.²

Whilst waiting here for the 70th to march in, General

¹ Guides themselves sometimes lose their way in these pathless wastes.

² "The Brahuis have a proverbial saying to the effect that no other place of final torment was needed after the formation of Dadar. The descriptions given of it by those who have passed a hot season there, are most painful. Men by no means given to exaggeration assured me that they envied the dead, and that they would rather die than pass another season there; that the thermometer in tents stood at 130°, with an entire stagnation of air."—*Diary of the Rev T. N. Allen in 1842.*

Biddulph found food for anxious thought in the reports furnished to him by Captain F. S. Reynolds, the political officer who had been sent to collect and stack fuel and fodder at different points in the Bolan. He and his voluntary assistant, Mr. Pitman of the Telegraph Department, had done their best, but with very poor results. The treeless desert and equally treeless Pass yielded no fire-wood, and the small quantity of forage which had sprung into life on the banks of the irrigation channels was not yet ready for cutting. There was still sufficient grain in the provision columns for the horses and bullocks, but none could be spared for the camels, whom the long marches through the rugged Dera Bughti country, on bad water and insufficient food, had already reduced to a miserable condition. That vast numbers of them must die between Dadar and Quetta admitted of no question; yet the General's orders to push on as rapidly as possible were peremptory; delay could have done nothing to improve matters; and the quicker the wretched creatures' failing strength was turned to account, the better for the troops. They, too, arrived at Dadar in evil case. What with foot-sores and sun-fever, numbers had broken down on the march; at one time, half the 70th were being carried, and the regiment presented the aspect of a sick convoy rather than that of the advance guard of an invading army. Conditions, however, that were to prove fatal to the camels, were in some respects favourable to the troops. The mere change from the glare of the desert to the shade of the deep defile was a relief to weary eyes, and the rush of the river, a refreshment to men who, for many days, had been tormented by thirst, and forced to slake it with water

impregnated with salt, or, worse still, with sulphate of soda which caused excruciating pain and weakening diarrhoea. There was still plenty of work to be done in helping to drag the guns up the steeper parts of the Pass—the 70th waited for the Battery to come up before resuming its march—but there were intervals of pleasant strolling along by the river side, and of fishing and bathing in its clear cool stream, which was just then in one of its friendly moods, not foaming, and raging, and sweeping all before it, as was to be the case later on.¹ But for the artillery horses and bullocks, and for the transport animals, there were no such restful interludes. Loaded up often for ten hours at a stretch, day by day they stumbled along over stones and small boulders, at the rate of a mile an hour, their feet cut and torn by the shingle and grit of the precipitous path. Numbers fell by the road-side, or lay down at night never to rise again, leaving their loads to swell the burdens of the hapless survivors, and their bodies to taint the air and poison the water all along the road, for to bury them in the rocky ground was impossible, and in those barren regions there were no birds of prey and no wild beasts, except hyenas, to act as scavengers. For the time being, indeed, winter robbed them of their power to harm; frozen hard to the ground, they lay as inert as the stones among which they had fallen. But with the return of spring, they woke

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¹ On one occasion in the first Afghan war, a flood in the Bolan river carried away the camp of the Engineers and Sappers and Miners. The water rose suddenly ten feet, filling the entire valley, and forty-five men and all the tents, baggage, and cattle were lost.

to the activity of decay, and became the fertile parent of typhoid and cholera.

Apart from this source of disease, the halting-places used by the Kafilas on their way to and from India, and recently occupied by the regiments from Bombay and Jacobabad, which had gone singly up the Pass, were in a very unsanitary state. It was still, however, found possible to encamp Biddulph's men on fresh ground, though only at the cost of widening the area of dirt for their successors—the conservancy establishment of the Force being quite inadequate to maintain cleanliness and decency.

Near the summit of the Pass, the nights became very cold, and over the barren, waterless Dasht-i-Badaulat—the Plain without Wealth—the bitter wind, which in winter blasts even the hardy southernwood, had already begun to blow down from the distant, cloud-capped mountains.¹ The effect of this sudden change of temperature upon ill-clad men was what had been expected. Cases of pneumonia became common, first, among the Native and, afterwards, among the European troops; and once again, large numbers had to be carried. Yet the soldiers had, at least, shelter, and food, and hospital care when sick; but the camp-followers had no shelter, insufficient food, and no one to carry them when too ill to walk; so they, too, dropped out and died; their fate differing from that of their camels only in this—

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¹ This wealthless plain is lovely in spring, when the southernwood and wild thyme burst into new life, filling the air with fragrance, and the ground is ablaze with tulips, irises, and the yellow crocus.

that, as a rule, some kind of rude burial was accorded to their bodies.¹

At Sir-i-ab, on the further side of this desolate plain, the river Shahdazai Lora gushes, crystal-clear, out of a hill side, and flows through a high upland valley² 5,600 feet above sea level, twelve miles long and from three to four wide, bounded by many-tinted mountains of bold and fantastic shape. In the very centre of this valley stands Quetta, now a great fortress, but, in 1878, a mere mud fort, crowning a little detached hill about 80 feet high, round which clustered a small town, shut in by mud walls, containing about 4,500 inhabitants, one half Baluchis, the other half Pathans. The low-lying parts of the Quetta valley being well watered by numerous springs, yield fair crops of corn, lucerne, and

¹ "The special knowledge of the military expert is not needed to detect the terrible neglect which could have allowed troops and camp-followers born and bred under a tropical sun, to proceed to Quetta without the simplest means of protection from the rigours of an almost arctic climate, though those means were available in abundance in, or near the places from which they started. The consequences that have followed are of a kind at which humanity would shudder even if they were unavoidable—hospitals filled with soldiers crippled for life by exposure; the line of march marked by the skeletons of half-naked coolies, literally frozen to death."—Extract from article in *Calcutta Englishman*.

There may have been "means of protection" in abundance for this little force, but certainly there was neither time for their collection, nor transport for their conveyance.

² The valley of Shal, or Quetta.—"Shal is the more ancient name, and is traced by Rawlinson as far back as the tenth century A.D."—Dr. T. H. Thornton

vegetables, and are dotted over with apple, pear, and apricot trees; but the parts near the hills are stony and barren. Owing to the nearness of water to the surface the richer tract is very unhealthy, and the great variations of temperature which prevail over the entire area, give birth to pneumonia, dysentery, and a very bad type of fever, from which the Native troops were soon to suffer severely.¹

Biddulph, who had left Dadar on the 2nd of November, rode into Quetta with his Staff on the 9th, and assumed command of all the troops in the district. His coming had been anxiously awaited; for, though the Jacobabad and Bombay regiments had got in before him, the situation was still a very critical one. Khandahari spies in British pay, had sent in word that the large Afghan garrison of that city had been reinforced from Herat by three cavalry, three infantry regiments, and six guns, and that the Commander-in-Chief, Safdar Ali Khan, with the approval of the Governor, Sirdar Meer Afzal Khan, was about to send forward troops to occupy the Pishin valley.*

To meet this threatened advance, Colonel H. S. Keene, the officer in command, had only a Mountain Battery, one squadron of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry, six companies of the 1st Punjab Infantry, one company of Sappers and Miners,

¹ Although drainage works and other improvements have been made at Quetta since 1878, it still bears an evil reputation. A regiment of Native Infantry which two or three years ago moved up there from the plains, had 300 men in hospital very soon after its arrival, 50 of whom died.

² These reports were confirmed by the British Minister at the Persian Court. [See Central Asia, No. 1 (1879), p. 9.]

the 32nd Pioneers (Musbi Sikhs), and, at Khelat, 30 miles away, two companies of the 1st Punjab Infantry; and of this small force, barely numbering 1,500 men, one regiment—the Punjab Infantry—was composed exclusively of Pathans, in whose fidelity, if called upon to fight against their own kinsfolk, it was impossible to place implicit trust; and of the other—the Musbi Sikhs—twenty per cent were on the sick-list.

Foreseeing danger, Colonel J. Browne, R.E., the Executive Engineer, had been for some time busy in strengthening the fortifications of Quetta; and Sandeman and his assistant, Mr. Bruce, had strained every nerve to gather in supplies from the surrounding districts; but, notwithstanding all their efforts, there can be no doubt that had the signal for war been given early in October, instead of late in November, the weakly garrison would have been overwhelmed by the large Afghan force assembled at Kandahar. The attack on Ali Masjid would have been such a signal; and soldiers of wide outlook, like Sir Neville Chamberlain, Sir Frederick Haines, and Sir Samuel Browne, saw the necessary connection between the intended *coup-de-main* at one extremity of the frontier, and the fate of a British force at the other, and pressed it on the Viceroy's notice; but Lord Lytton was incapable of looking beyond the one object which happened to have fired his fancy, and, as we know, the attack upon the Khyber fortress would actually have been made, but for Sher Ali's action in reinforcing its defenders.

All anxiety for the safety of Quetta disappeared with the arrival of Biddulph's division, but the increase in the strength of its garrison added, in other directions, to the difficulties

and dangers of the situation. The year had been exceptionally unhealthy, even for that unhealthy region. Among the troops there had been no less than 3,242 admissions to hospital per thousand—in other words, each man on the average had been admitted $3\frac{1}{4}$ times—and it had been found impossible to grapple effectually with the causes of the sickness—defective drainage and a vast accumulation of decaying matter of all sorts, including the bodies of many camels. As these could neither be burned nor buried, the General did all that could be done in ordering that they should be dragged as far as possible from the vicinity of the town and camps; but the heavy mortality among his own transport rapidly increased the evil, and the sickly, half-frozen camp-followers were quite inadequate, both in numbers and strength to the performance of their ever growing duties. Among the newly arrived soldiers, also, a large proportion were sick, and as the existing hospital accommodation was barely sufficient for the needs of the original garrison, it became necessary to provide fresh, by hastily roofing in some unfinished barracks, and fitting them up temporarily for hospital purposes.

On the 13th of November, whilst the condition of Quetta was engaging General Biddulph's full attention, he received from the Indian Government a warning to hold his Division in readiness to advance into Afghan territory, a warning which he, at once, set to work to obey, though never, surely, was a force less fitted to assume the offensive. Not only were the troops on the spot very sickly, ill-clad and badly equipped, but some of the corps were still in the Bolan, and from every regiment numbers of men were absent on leave in India. The transport was in a miserable condition;

a large part of it had already perished; the remainder was worn out with fatigue and hunger; there was no grain in Quetta that could be spared for its use, and the southern-wood which clothed the hills, though food for the hill-camel, was poison to the camel of the plains. There were no transport officers to exercise any supervision over the unskilled drivers; no veterinary surgeons to minister to the diseases of the animals; and if the surgeons had been forthcoming, they could have done nothing, for even the simplest medicines and surgical instruments were lacking; so that the system of working the wretched creatures, ill or well, fed or hungry, till they fell down dead, had, perforce, to be continued.

The General's own position was perplexing in the extreme. Instead of the proper complement of Staff and Departmental Officers, who ought to have been at his disposal, he still had with him only the three officers who had accompanied him from Multan, and Captain Corrie Bird. There was no Commissariat Officer to be responsible for the feeding of the troops; and, but for the supplies collected by Sandeman and Bruce, the experience of Sir John Keane's Force in the First Afghan War, when, for twenty-eight days, the men were on half, the followers on quarter rations, and the horses without grain—would have been repeated at Quetta in 1878. As it was, the Cavalry had to be sent back to Mastung, where forage was less scarce than at the front. There was no Principal Medical Officer to consult with on matters connected with the health of the troops, and the arrangements that would have to be made for the conveyance and treatment of the sick and wounded during the impending campaign; the Artillery and the Engineers were without their command-

ing officers; and, to crown all, the Generals who were to command the Cavalry Brigade and the two Infantry Brigades, with their respective Staffs, had not yet left India.

Such a state of things might almost have justified a General in declaring that the orders of the Government were unreasonable, and could not be complied with; but Biddulph was not the man to be daunted by difficulties, and though many details which ought to have been attended to, had to be neglected, the preparations for the advance were pushed forward with the greatest energy, and the Sappers and 32nd Pioneers were set to work to improve the road over the Murghi Pass, leading northward out of the Quetta valley. Along this road, on the 18th and 19th of November, the General, accompanied by Sandeman, reconnoitred as far as the village of Kushlak, in the valley of the same name, where a good supply of water was found, and some grazing for the hill-camels. On returning from this expedition, Biddulph was cheered by the news that Colonel H. Moore and Captain R. M. Stewart, both of the Quarter-Master-General's Staff; Lieutenant-Colonel C. B. Le Messurier, commanding Royal Artillery; Lieutenant-Colonel W. Hichens, commanding Royal Engineers; Deputy Surgeon-General T. Hendley, Principal Medical Officer, and Surgeon W. E. Manley, V. C.; and lastly, Lieutenant-Colonel C. S. Lane, Principal Commissariat Officer had arrived in his absence. Not an hour too soon, for the same evening a cypher telegram brought the expected order for the concentration of the Division on the Afghan frontier; and the next day, leaving behind it a garrison consisting of the 30th Bombay Native Infantry, two Mountain guns, and a Squadron of cavalry under the

command of Colonel W. G. Mainwaring, the Force, still without its Brigadier-Generals and Brigade Staff Officers, marched from Quetta and Mastung, in successive detachments, for the convenience of supply, carrying with them seven days' food and firewood. The movement was covered by a column of observation under Colonel Clay, consisting of a battalion of infantry, two guns and two squadrons of cavalry, which pushed forward to the north-east of Kushlak to secure the safety of the right flank of the Division, and to guard its communications with Quetta. On the 20th, the troops that had left India two months before to strengthen the Quetta garrison, together with a part of that garrison, were echeloned along the roads leading into Southern Afghanistan, ready, on the morrow, to cross the frontier, and eager to press on to Kandahar.

Whilst the Quetta reinforcements were marching through the desert and up the Bolan, a Field Force also destined for Kandahar, was assembling at Multan. The following Table shows its composition :—

TABLE SHOWING THE CONSTITUTION OF THE MULTAN FIELD FORCE.

ENGINEER DEPARTMENT.

Three Companies of Sappers and Miners.
Engineer Field Park.

ARTILLERY.

A Battery,		B Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery			
I	„	1st	„	Royal Artillery.	
D	„	2nd	„	„	„
G	„	4th	„	„	„

No. 13	Battery,	8th	Brigade,	Royal	Artillery.	} With Siege Train.
" 16	"	8th	"	"	"	
" 5	"	11th	"	"	"	} Heavy.
" 6	"	11th	"	"	"	
" 8	"	11th	"	"	"	With Siege Train.
" 11	"	11th	"	"	"	Mountain.

Ordnance Park.

CAVALRY.

15th Hussars.

8th Bengal Cavalry.

19th Bengal Lancers.

INFANTRY

1ST BRIGADE.

2nd Battalion 60th Rifles.

15th Sikhs.

25th Punjab Infantry.

2ND BRIGADE.

59th Foot.

1st Gurkhas.

3rd Gurkhas.

12th (Khelat-i-Ghilzai) Regiment.

Approximate effective strength of Force after it had passed through the ordeal of inspection by Deputy Surgeon-General A. Smith, who rigorously eliminated every weakling:—200 officers, 6,600 men of all ranks, 1,800 horses and 42 guns.¹

¹ Staff and Departmental Officers of the Multan Field Force:—Lieutenant N. R. Stewart, Aide-de-Camp; Captain E. Molloy, Interpreter; Colonel J. Hills, V. C., C. B., Assistant Adjutant-General; Major E. F. Chapman, Assistant Quartermaster-General; Major G. U. Prior and Captain A. Gaselee, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-Generals; Captain R. F. C. A. Tytler, Deputy Judge Advocate; Deputy Surgeon-General A. Smith, Principal Medical Officer; Colonel T. H. Sibley, Chief Commissariat Officer;

The camp-followers of all kinds who formed a second army of nearly equal size, were subjected to a like medical scrutiny, and many among them—especially among the dhoolie bearers who required to be exceptionally strong and hardy men—were rejected as unfit for the heavy duties in store for them. Of the bearers selected, only a very small proportion were trained carriers, and until the majority had acquired by practice some knowledge of their work, they were a source of trouble and anxiety to the medical officers, and of suffering to the sick.

The command of the Division, and ultimately the supreme control of all the troops in Southern Afghanistan, had been given to Lieutenant-General D. M. Stewart,¹ C.B. No

Colonel M. J. Brander, Assistant Commissary-General; Colonel R. H. Sankey, Commanding Engineer; Major A. le Messurier, Brigade-Major; Lieutenants C. F. Call and E. S. E. Childers, Assistant Field Engineers; Lieutenant G. R. R. Savage, Superintendent of Field Telegraphs; Brigadier-General C. G. Arburthnot, C. B., Commanding Artillery; Captain A. D. Anderson, Brigade-Major; Colonel E. J. Bruce, Commanding the Siege Train; Major W. H. Noble, Staff Officer of the Siege Train; Captain A. B. Lanning, Adjutant of Artillery; Major C. Cowie, in charge of Ordnance Field Park; Brigadier-General W. Fane, C. B., Commanding Cavalry Brigade; Captain H. H. F. Gifford, Brigade-Major; Brigadier-General R. Barter, Commanding 1st Infantry Brigade; Captain C. M. Stockley, Brigade-Major; Brigadier-General R. J. Hughes, Commanding 2nd Infantry Brigade; Major A. G. Handcock, Brigade-Major.

¹ Donald Martin Stewart. Born, 1824. Entered the Army 1840. Distinguished himself greatly in the Mutiny by his daring ride from Agra to Delhi, in charge of despatches, through the most disaffected district in India, swarming at the time with mu-

better selection could have been made for either post, but the combination of the two, in one person, was a mistake of which it was easy to foresee the probable evil consequences; for either the care of his own special corps must absorb the General's entire attention to the detriment, real or imaginary, of its sister division, and to the neglect of the higher duties, political and military, devolving upon him as commander of the whole force—or else those higher duties must interfere with the effectual supervision of the troops under his immediate command. In any case, the relation in which the dual nature of his own office placed General Stewart towards General Biddulph, was one in which harmonious co-operation between the two could only be maintained by the exercise of the most delicate tact on the part of the superior, and of the most cheerful subordination on the part of the inferior officer, and, unfortunately, both the tact and the subordination were, in the sequel, occasionally lacking.

It had been intended that the Second Division should

tineers. On his arrival before that city he was appointed to the Adjutant-General's Department, and continued to serve for many years on the army Head Quarters' Staff. Commanded a Brigade in the Abyssinian campaign, and in 1878 was in command of the Lahore Division. Shrewd, sagacious, quick of understanding, patient in listening to other men's views and fair-minded to profit by them—Stewart had not the ready sympathy and genial manner which have sometimes won for very inferior commanders the enthusiastic devotion of their troops, and in his desire to be just to the Government and to spare the public purse, he was credited with abstaining too scrupulously from pressing the claims of his officers and men.

follow in the steps of the First; but Biddulph's report of the Dera Bughti route was so unfavourable that, at the eleventh hour, the Government ordered it to proceed to Dadar *viâ* Sukkur and Jacobabad, with the exception of the 15th Hussars, the 8th Bengal Cavalry, and the 12th Bengal Infantry, which were to adhere to the road originally selected. This change of plans enormously increased the strain upon the Military and Civil authorities. Had the railway from Multan to Sukkur been completed, the troops would have been moved from the former to the latter station with comparative ease and speed; but the railway was not complete, though Lord Lytton must have been well aware of the need there would be for it in the war to which his policy had so long been tending. Now, in breathless haste, and at greatly enhanced cost, the making of this line was pushed on; and it was actually opened for the conveyance of troops and stores whilst the trains could only travel at the rate of six miles an hour, and several of the hastily improvised bridges collapsed when taken into use. But an efficient railway would only have simplified matters as far as Sukkur; from that point camel transport was essential, and how to get the 20,000 that would be required, at so short a notice, was a difficult problem for the civil authorities in Sind to solve; not for lack of camels—there were plenty of them in the country engaged in the carrying trade—but because their owners, remembering what had been the fate of the transport animals in the First Afghan War, were reluctant to hire them to Government, even at the very high price that its pressing needs compelled it to offer. In the end, however, on the receipt of a solemn promise that their beasts

should not be required to go beyond Dadar, where hill transport was supposed to be awaiting the arrival of the Force—they yielded, and camels began slowly to come in. The arrangements for their collection and for providing, so far as possible, in other ways for the wants of the great force which was about to cross the desert of Baluchistan, were entrusted to a Bombay civilian, Mr. C. E. Biddulph,¹ who rendered excellent service throughout both phases of the war.

On the 17th of November, most of the troops having preceded him, Sir Donald Stewart, accompanied by his principal Staff Officers, left Multan for Sukkur. The sights which met his eye all along the railway were not reassuring. Baggage and stores blocked the stations; and at Rohri, opposite Sukkur, there was a great accumulation of men and supplies of every description, waiting to be ferried across the Indus—a difficult and tedious business where the means of transport were so limited that not more than forty, or fifty tons could be passed over the river in the course of a day. On the 20th, Stewart rode into Shikarpur, where he inspected D. 2 and I. 1 Royal Artillery; and here, on the eve of the day which was to decide the question of war or peace, we must leave him for a while, whilst we turn our attention to the movements of the troops at the other extremity of the North-West Frontier.

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¹ The author of a number of interesting pamphlets and articles bearing on the Central Asian Question, on which subject he writes with the authority of an experienced traveller and administrator.

CHAPTER XVII

THE KURAM VALLEY FIELD FORCE.

MAJOR-GENERAL F. S. Roberts, V.C., C.B., on whom the command of the Kuram Field Force had been bestowed, arrived at Kohat on the 9th of October¹ to find the arrangements for the advance of his Force in a very backward state, and the Force itself inadequate to the work it was expected to perform. That work included, in the first place, the occupation of the Kuram Valley and the expulsion of all Afghan garrisons south of the Shutargardan Pass; in the second, as opportunity might offer, the pushing of reconnaissances into the Khost Valley, whence, if military considerations would admit, the Amir's Administrator was

¹ Frederick Sleigh Roberts. Born 1832. Entered army 1851. Greatly distinguished himself in the Mutiny. Served in Abyssinia on the Staff, and, at close of campaign, superintended the re-embarkation of troops. Spent many years on the Army Head Quarters' Staff at Simla, and acquired in the Quarter-Master-General's Department, of which, at the time of the outbreak of the war, he was the head, an almost unique knowledge of the requirements of an army. A man of great energy, and endowed with the temperament and manner which attract and dominate soldiers, Roberts had no experience of command, and his constitutional daring and his contempt for an uncivilized foe, predisposed him to rash resolves, and hasty action.

to be dislodged; and finally, the exploration of the roads leading into the unknown region beyond Khost.

It was not as if the theatre of operations were close at hand. The Peiwar Kotal, where the Amir's troops were likely to make their stand against the British invader, was seventy-three miles from Thal; Thal, where a strongly entrenched post would have to be established, sixty-three miles from Kohat;¹ and though the road between these two last named places was entirely in British territory, it lay so near hills inhabited by tribes in whose peaceful intentions it was unsafe to place implicit confidence, that it would have to be guarded almost as though it ran through an enemy's country. Kohat itself had but a weak garrison; and that station was separated from Rawal Pindi, its base of supply and nearest support, by the Indus,² and by one hundred and

¹ Peshawar, only thirty-six miles from Kohat, and on the same side of the Indus, could not serve as the primary base of the troops concentrating at Kohat, because practically cut off from the latter station by a mass of rugged hills, inhabited by the Pass Afridis with a section of whom the Indian Government had recently been at war, on whose submission it was unsafe to reckon, and a rupture with whom might have exercised an unfavourable influence on the negotiations which Cavagnari was carrying on with other sections of the same Tribe.

² It will be remembered that with a view to the movements which were about to begin, a bridge of boats had, for the first time, been thrown across the Indus at Kushalgarh, in the cold weather of 1876; but as that bridge had to be dismantled when the snow began to melt, and could not be restored till after the rains, communication between Rawal Pindi and Kohat had, and has still, to be maintained, by country boats during half the year.

eight miles of wild country, traversed by the worst of roads. To defeat a strong enemy at a point one hundred and thirty-six miles from his base, and, at the same time, to guard his communications, with only six Native and one British infantry regiments, two regiments of Native and one squadron British cavalry, a single battery Royal Horse Artillery and two mountain batteries—seemed to Roberts an almost impossible task; and his consciousness of its difficulty was deepened by the discovery that the Pathan soldiers, of whom there were many in four out of the six Native regiments, were reluctant to fight against their co-religionist, the Amir, and that the one British infantry regiment—the 2nd Battalion of the 8th King's—was so saturated with fever that a great portion of it was quite unfit for service.

And not only was the Kuram Field Force weak in numbers and in internal strength, it was poorly equipped, and its transport, though procured at enormous cost, unequal to hard work in a mountainous country. Fortunately, however, its commander was in closest touch with the Military Departments at Simla, and enjoyed Lord Lytton's special favour, so that the representations he at once addressed to Head Quarters, met with prompter attention than was accorded to those of officers who had even greater reason to complain. Many deficiencies in the equipment of his troops were made good. He was allowed to retain the 23rd Pioneers whom it had been intended to transfer to the Khyber Column; and the 72nd Highlanders, a battery of Field Artillery, and the 28th Punjab Infantry, were sent to Kohat;—half the battery and half the British regiment to strengthen that

station; the other half of each to accompany the advance; and the Native regiment to form part of the Thal garrison. The thirty elephants, for which he asked to carry his field guns, were also granted; and, though they were long in appearing, they overtook the column in time to do good service at the attack on the Peiwar Kotal. In the matter of other transport Sinla was powerless; but Roberts was a man who not only knew where to turn for help, but how to help himself; and, if he could not get better mules and ponies, he could, and did, see that those he had to accept were properly cared for, and not overladen, though he never stinted his soldiers in the matter of baggage and diet, rightly feeling that it was poor economy to have, in the end, to carry sick men instead of blankets and tents and larger supplies of food.

From the hour of General Robert's arrival at Kohat, the work of organizing and moving the troops went on apace. On the 10th of October, the 5th Punjab Infantry and a wing of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, under the command of Colonel J. J. Gordon, were despatched to Thal, followed, on the 11th, by F.A. Royal Horse Artillery and the 29th Punjab Native Infantry, and on subsequent days by other regiments, as their equipment was completed. Meanwhile, the 7th Company of Sappers and Miners were busily engaged in connecting Kohat and Thal by a telegraph wire; and the 23rd Pioneers, assisted by 800 of the inhabitants of the district, who had been placed at the disposal of the military authorities by the Deputy Commissioner, Major Plowden,¹

¹ Major Plowden was on this and many other occasions of

were making good progress with a cart-road. By the 19th of November both telegraph and cart-road were finished, and materials for a trestle bridge lay ready for use at Thal, where two months' supply of provisions, collected by the commissariat, had been housed in large tents; whilst at Kohat, the roomy lines vacated by the 5th Punjab Cavalry had been converted into a Commissariat Dépôt.

The hospital arrangements, to which General Roberts devoted much attention, were admirably organised by Deputy Surgeon-General F. F. Allen. The Kohat Station Hospital, containing fifty-six beds, supplemented by seven European tents, the whole under the care of Surgeon-Major Martin, was set apart as a Base Hospital for British troops; and a Base Hospital for Native troops, with one hundred and fifty beds, Surgeon-Major Costello in charge, was likewise, established at Kohat. Attached to each regiment¹ was a small hospital in which slight wounds and mild cases of sickness were to be treated; and a Divisional Hospital for the re-

great service to the Force. One way in which he earned its gratitude was by furnishing "badraggas," or small armed escorts, to protect the grass-cutters and the camels when grazing. These escorts, drawn from the people of the district, relieved the troops of a harassing duty.

¹ The 8th King's, thanks to the foresight of the regimental authorities and of the Principal Medical Officer of the Rawal Pindi Division, Dr. Alexander Smith, entered on the campaign so well stocked with medicines and medical appliances as to be in a position to give great assistance in furnishing the Base Hospital at Kohat and the Field Hospital at Thal, and, had still something to spare to the Native regiments, which were, as a rule, badly provided with drugs and medical instruments.

ception of more serious cases, for the service of which fifteen European tents were allotted, was to accompany the column as far as the Kuram Forts.

Being invested with full political as well as with full military powers, General Roberts gave much anxious thought to the problem of how to gain and keep the goodwill of the inhabitants of the Kuram, and of the warlike tribes bordering on that valley, whilst asserting his right to take any measures that might seem to him essential to the success of his enterprise. His political adviser, Colonel Waterfield, Commissioner of Peshawar, whose jurisdiction extended to Kohat, was able to assure him that the Turis, the principal people of the Kuram, had suffered so much from the tyranny of their Afghan rulers that, if certain of good treatment and permanent protection, they were little likely to regard the British advance with hostility; and after repeated interviews with many chiefs who had come down from their hills to meet him, and with a number of Native gentlemen—British subjects, but, from one cause or another, possessed of influence beyond our border—whom Waterfield had summoned to Kohat, Roberts felt so convinced that all that was needed to secure the steady co-operation of the Tribes was to relieve their minds of the fear of being abandoned to the vengeance of the Amir at the close of the war, that he applied to the Indian Government for leave to assure all whom it might concern, that British authority, once established throughout the region in which he was about to operate, would never be withdrawn. This request was at once granted; but the suggestion that convoys should be allowed to make use of the road to the Kuram Forts, running

through country belonging to the Zaimukhts, was rejected, in deference to the strong protests of the Foreign Department; and supplies had to follow the circuitous route *viâ* Thal by which the troops had advanced, until it was found possible to construct a road up the left bank of the Kuram River, outside the territory of that tribe.

It is impossible to speak too highly of the energy, clear-headedness and practical knowledge displayed by General Roberts during those busy weeks of preparation. That his Force took the field fully equipped is, in itself, the highest possible testimony to the quality and quantity of his work; but, in comparing the results obtained by him with those that rewarded the labours of other commanders, it is only fair to remember, not only the peculiarly favourable relation in which he stood to the authorities at Simla, but, also, the fact that, from the first, he was furnished with an adequate Staff—several transport officers, for instance, where Biddulph had none—some of the members of which he had been permitted to select, a privilege not accorded to every General Officer.

By the 15th of November, the Kuram Field Force, organized in two Brigades, the First under Brigadier-General A. H. Cobbe, the Second under Brigadier-General J. B. Thelwall, C.B., as well as the troops who, under Major J. C. Stewart, 5th Punjab Cavalry, were to occupy Thal, had assembled at that fort, where, on the 18th, they were joined by their Commander. On the following day Roberts having reconnoitred the river, selected a site for the trestle bridge, a simple but serviceable structure with a twelve foot roadway, which the Engineers immediately began throwing across

the fair-weather channel of that stream; the enemy at Fort Kapiang on the opposite bank, watching, but not hindering the work. By the evening of the 20th the bridge was in its place, and yet another British Force stood ready to enter Afghan territory on the day appointed by Lord Lytton for the commencement of hostilities.

TABLE SHOWING THE CONSTITUTION OF THE KURAM VALLEY FIELD FORCE.

ENGINEER DEPARTMENT.

7th Company Bengal Sappers and Miners.
Engineer Field Park.

ARTILLERY.

F Battery A Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery.
Half of G Battery 3rd Brigade, Royal Artillery.
No. 1 Mountain Battery, Punjab Frontier Force.
Ordnance Field Park.

CAVALRY.

One Squadron 10th Hussars.
12th Bengal Cavalry.

INFANTRY.

1ST BRIGADE.

2nd Battalion, 8th Foot.
29th Punjab Infantry.
5th Punjab Infantry, Punjab Frontier Force.

2ND BRIGADE.

Wing of 72nd Highlanders.
2nd Punjab Infantry, Punjab Frontier Force.
5th Gurkhas, Punjab Frontier Force.
23rd Pioneers. (Musbi Sikhs.)

GARRISON OF THAL.

No. 2 Mountain Battery, Punjab Frontier Force.

Wing of 15th Punjab Cavalry, Punjab Frontier Force.

21st Punjab Infantry.

On Line of Communications between Thal and Kohat.

Wing of 5th Punjab Cavalry, Punjab Frontier Force.

Approximate effective strength:—150 officers, 5,500 men of all ranks, 950 horses and 17 guns. ¹

¹ Staff and Departmental Officers of the Kuram Valley Field Force:—Captain G. T. Pretzman, Aide-de-Camp; Lieutenant N. F. Chamberlain and Lieutenant-Colonel George Villiers, Orderly-Officers; Major Galbraith, Assistant Adjutant-General; Major H. Collett, Assistant Quartermaster-General; Captain R. G. Kennedy and Captain F. S. Carr, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-Generals; Deputy Surgeon-General F. F. Allen, C.B., Principal Medical Officer; Captain A. R. Badcock, Chief Commissariat-Officer; Lieutenant-Colonel Æneas Perkins, Commanding Engineer; Lieutenant F. T. N. Spratt and Lieutenant S. Grant, Assistant Field-Engineers; Captain A. S. Wynne, Superintendent of Field-Telegraphs; Lieutenant-Colonel A. H. Lindsay, Commanding Artillery; Lieutenant E. G. Osborne, Adjutant Artillery; Captain J. A. S. Colquhoun, In charge of Ordnance Field Park; Colonel Hugh Gough, V.C., C.B., Commanding Cavalry; Brigadier-General A. H. Cobbe, Commanding 1st Infantry Brigade; Captain A. Scott, V.C., Brigade-Major; Brigadier-General J. B. Thelwall, C.B., Commanding 2nd Infantry Brigade; Captain G. de C. Morton, Brigade-Major; Major J. C. Stewart, Commanding Garrison of Thal; Captain R. Woodthorpe, Superintendent of Surveys; Major D. Moriarty, Superintendent of Transport; Captain H. Goad and Lieutenant A. Maissey, Assistant Superintendents; Rev. J. W. Adams, Chaplain.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PESHAWAR VALLEY FIELD FORCE.

• It will be remembered that, early in October, the Viceroy had given consent to the formation of a Reserve Force for the support of the garrison of Peshawar. At the end of that month, when a partial advance upon Kabul by the Khyber route had been added to the general plan of operations which were to break the power of the Amir, it was decided to raise this force, the command of which was bestowed upon Lieutenant-General F. F. Maude, V.C., C.B.,¹ from

¹ Frederick Francis Maude. Born 1821; died 1897. Entered the Army in 1840. Served throughout the Gwalior campaign. Was present with his regiment, the 3rd Buffs, at the battle of Puniar. Served with the same regiment in the Crimea. Commanded the ladder party in the attack on the Redan, on which occasion he was dangerously wounded, and won the Victoria Cross. In 1878 was commanding the Rawal Pindi Division, the largest and most important in India. Maude was a man of fine physique and noble nature, of great energy and sound judgment; devoted to his profession, of which he had made himself a thorough master. A strict disciplinarian, his justice won for him the respect, and his kindness, the love of his officers and men, to whom, in war, he set a fine example of self-denial and simplicity of life, refusing all luxuries and sharing the hardships of his troops. His firmness and independence of character made him less popular with the Army Head-Quarters' Staff, from whom

6,000 to 10,000 men, and to assign to it the task of clearing the Afghan troops out of the Pass, and of occupying Dakka. A week or two later, this plan was again modified: instead of one division, the Peshawar Valley Field Force was to consist of two, of which the first was to advance on Dakka, whilst the second safeguarded its communications.

Since there were to be two Divisions, Maude, not unnaturally, expected to receive the command of the First, and he actually learned privately from an officer of the Headquarters' Staff, that he had been nominated to it by Sir F. Haines, and the nomination accepted by the Indian Government; yet, in the end, it was the Second Division that fell to his share, whilst the command of the First went to Sir Samuel Browne, V.C., C.B., K.C.S.I.;¹ and when he remonstrated, it was only to be told by the Commander-in-Chief that strong political reasons had rendered the change of which he complained, imperative. In reality, there was only one reason for it; viz., Lord Lytton's desire to substitute Sir N. Chamberlain for Sir S. Browne, as Military

he was not always to receive the support and consideration to which his position and experience entitled him.

¹ Samuel James Browne. Born 1824. Entered the army 1840. Saw service first in the Punjab campaign, 1848-49. In the Mutiny lost his arm and won the Victoria Cross. Having been for many years in the Punjab Frontier Force, he had far more knowledge of the border and its tribes than any of the other Generals employed in the war; and for this reason, as well as on account of his kindly nature and upright character, his appointment to the command of the First Division of the Peshawar Valley Field Force was hailed with great satisfaction by the Indian army.

Member of Council, in the hope that from the former he should receive more support and less criticism than he had met with at the hands of the latter. A very short experience was to convince the Viceroy that his new military adviser was just as little likely as the old one to lend his sanction to immature schemes, and methods ill-adapted to the conditions under which they were to be applied; but, by that time, the injustice to Maude had been committed.

Fortunately for the public service, the disappointed General was a man who never allowed private feeling to interfere with the performance of public duty, and to whose delicate sense of honour it would have seemed disgraceful to suffer a wrong done to himself by the Government, to prejudice the terms on which he stood with the old friend who profited by his loss. As a consequence of this magnanimity of mind, the relations between him and Browne throughout the campaign were of the most cordial nature; a fact all the more to the credit of both generals that, in themselves, those relations tended to friction and discord.

On the Kandahar line of advance, where two Divisions were also employed, the chief command, as we have seen, was vested in the commander of one of them; and the difficulties that resulted from this arrangement were such as sprang from the natural inclination of that General to favour the troops with which he was more particularly connected, and to take too little account of the difficulties of those with whom he was seldom brought into personal contact; or from the inclination, equally natural in the subordinate officer, to believe in the existence of favouritism or neglect. In the Khyber, there was neither superior

nor subordinate, but two co-ordinate authorities, with no tie between them save the duty of working for a common end; a bond which did not necessarily insure harmony of action, since there was always the possibility of differences of opinion as to the best way of attaining that end.¹ The dangers of this arrangement were so clear to General Maude that he openly expressed the opinion that he and his Division should have been placed under Browne's orders, and throughout the whole campaign he acted as though this had been the case.

The real remedy, both in the Khyber and at Kandahar, as none knew better than Sir F. Haines, would have lain in amalgamating the two Divisions and their Reserve Forces, and placing their Generals under the orders of the Commander of the Army Corps thus created; but an Army Corps Commander would have meant an Army Corps Commander's Staff, and Lord Lytton, who did not understand that, in war, efficiency is the only possible economy, could not be induced to face the expense which such a body would involve.²

¹ All readers of Napier's History of the Peninsular War will remember how narrowly Crauford's Division escaped destruction, in an engagement on the river Coa, for lack of the help which Picton, who saw his rival's peril, refused to render, and which the former General could only ask as a favour, not demand as a right.

² "The Commander-in-Chief is fully aware of the difficulty in which Sir S. Browne and yourself are suddenly placed with regard to your relations to each other. Sir F. Haines always contemplated the two Divisions being under superior control as an

Meanwhile, the Force, whose constitution and destination had been so long in debate, was rapidly assembling at Lawrencepur. It consisted of:—

ARTILLERY.

D Battery,	A Brigade,	Royal Horse Artillery.
H "	C Brigade,	" " "
C "	3	Royal Artillery.

CAVALRY.

9th Lancers.
13th Bengal Lancers.

BRITISH INFANTRY.

5th Fusiliers.
25th King's Own Borderers.

NATIVE INFANTRY.

6th Bengal Infantry.
24th " "
2nd Gurkhas.
Mainwarra Battalion.
2 Companies Sappers and Miners.

Army Corps, but the Government would not have the arrangement; consequently, the practical inconvenience. However, there is nothing for it but for both to act for the furtherance of the public service. As he will most probably advance to Jelalabad and must be able to call upon you for such support and assistance as he may require in furtherance of his project, His Excellency feels confident you will use your utmost endeavour to respond to the same." (Letter from the Adjutant-General, P. Lumsden, to General Maude. At its foot appears the following characteristic note:—"As if he were writing to an ill-disciplined ensign! F. F. Maude".)

Its approximate strength was 6,000 men with 18 guns, and, thanks to its Commander's energy and power of organisation, to the resources of Rawal Pindi, on which it was able to draw, and to the fact that the troops composing it had spent the summer in comparatively healthy stations—one of the British regiments had just come down from the Hills—when the time came for it to move, except in the matter of Staff officers,¹ its efficiency left little to be desired. On the 18th of November it was at Attock; on the 19th it crossed the Indus by the bridge of boats which then spanned that river; and on the 20th it reached Naushahra, a small cantonment on the Kabul River, which, with Hoti Mardan, the home of the celebrated Guide Corps,² and the small forts of Abazai, Shabkadar and Michni, protected Peshawar against attack from the north and north-west. Here, however, Maude's advance was arrested by the loss of his transport, which was hastily withdrawn, its services being required elsewhere.

¹ A list of these will be given later on; in the meanwhile it is sufficient to say that they were drawn principally from the Rawal Pindi Division.

² Perhaps the most noteworthy passage in the Guides' fine record occurred in the Mutiny in 1857, when they left Murdan at six hours' notice; were at Attock, 30 miles off, the next morning, fully equipped for service, and thence pushed on to Delhi, a distance of 580 miles, or 50 regular marches, which they accomplished in 21 with only 3 intervening halts, and those made by order; and after thus marching 27 miles a day for three weeks, in the hot weather, engaged the enemy hand to hand, and had every one of its officers, more or less, wounded three hours after joining Anson's Force. See Punjab Mutiny Report.

It is difficult to conceive of the confusion which reigned from Jhelam to the Frontier, whilst Browne's Division was being brought together and pushed forward towards the position from which it was to take the offensive. Half the troops assigned to it belonged, indeed, to the Peshawar District and were, so to say, on the spot, but its other half and all its equipment, transport and stores had to be brought from down country, Peshawar having been swept bare to meet the demands of the Kuram Valley Field Force.¹ Into Jhelam—in those days the terminus of the North-Western Railway—trains were hourly pouring supplies in such enormous quantities, that the short-handed Commissariat was quite unable to deal with them; and, as there were no proper sidings, laden trucks thronged the station—not a few of them crowded with dead and dying mules, ponies and donkeys deserted by their drivers—piles of stores blocked the platforms, and, for miles on either side the line, grain and other perishable goods lay exposed to the vicissitudes of the weather, and the depredations of the *badmashes*² of the neighbouring villages.

Beyond Jhelam, the primitive, unwieldy bullock carts of the country had chiefly to be relied on for transport; and these, collected under harsh pressure from the reluctant ryots, came slowly crawling into the town from south, east, and

¹ Macpherson managed to unearth some tent material and a few blankets in the Native city, which he purchased for the camp-followers of his Brigade, but the commissariat got nothing in Peshawar.

² Bad characters.

west, to leave it, still more slowly, going northward by the Grand Trunk Road. That road was literally choked with heavily laden carts, camels, mules and ponies, through which Cavalry and Infantry regiments, Staff and Medical officers, even Generals of Brigade, in palki-garis, ekkas, or any sort of conveyance they could procure, struggled and fought their way to the front, leaving their baggage to follow when and how it could.¹ •

The sights he witnessed on his way from the Hills to Peshawar must have prepared Sir S. Browne to be informed, on reaching that city, by the Chief Commissariat officer of his Division, Colonel Hunter, that it was impossible to say when the boots, warm clothing, and other articles required by the troops would arrive; and to be told, a day or two

¹ Brigadier-General H. T. Macpherson tells in one of his letters home, how, at Attock, he took the wife of a Sergeant-Major, sick of fever, out of a bullock cart in which she was travelling, and putting her into his gari (carriage) sat himself in the doorway, with his feet on the step, and in this position passed his own regiment, the 2nd Gurkhas, and had great fun in watching the men, as he gravely salaamed to them, grinning as they tried to salute; and Surgeon-Major Evatt tells a story of an officer's wife, who, having had the good luck to procure a carriage to take her from Jhelam to Rawal Pindi, was asked by the post-master at the former place to allow a Native officer to travel on the top of her carriage. On her acceding to the request, the officer, in his gratitude, held out his sword for her to touch, and she, fancying he offered it to her as a guarantee that he would do her no harm, took it and placed it under the cushions, returning it to its astonished owner on arriving the next day at Rawal Pindi.

later, that it was vain to dream of getting the Force properly equipped by the 21st, and that to take thousands of weakly, half-clad camp-followers into the Khyber in such weather as already prevailed, would be to condemn a large number of them to certain death. As a humane man and a general experienced in hill-warfare, Browne must have felt the truth and force of these representations, but the power to act upon them was not his. Lord Lytton had decreed that hostilities were to begin on a certain day, and his orders must be carried out, however strongly those on whom their execution devolved might feel that, in fixing the date, the efficiency and health of the different Divisions had been sacrificed to the desire to forestall any yielding on Shere Ali's part.

The Commissariat was not the only department at its wits' end to know how to complete the most necessary preparations for a hostile advance in the few days still at its disposal. Ordnance stores were deficient, and the hospital arrangements were not finally settled until the Principal Medical Officer, Surgeon-General John Gibbons, arrived at Peshawar with directions to substitute Field Hospitals for Regimental Hospitals, and "it became necessary, in accordance with this new scheme, in three days, and practically in the face of the enemy, to remove all the medical officers and all the medical subordinates from their battalions; to •transfer all the Native hospital establishments from their regiments to the little understood new creations called "field-hospitals;" to hand over every grain of medicine, all instruments and technical equipment, tents, books and documents; to give and receive receipts on both sides; and finally, to

draw from the Commissariat, Barrack, Ordnance, and Transport Departments the various equipments needed for the same units, the very existence of which was unknown outside the Medical Department.”¹ The tents for these new hospitals were not issued to the medical officers in charge till 9 p.m. on the 18th, and even then no steps had been taken to provide them with mule carriage, and with equipment suitable for mountain warfare.²

Yet it was only too apparent that these disorganised and insufficient hospitals would soon be overflowing, for the troops drawn from the Peshawar Valley garrison entered upon the campaign with constitutions weakened by the malarial fever peculiar to that swampy district, a fever that is always liable to return in cold weather, and which predisposes those who suffer from it to pneumonia, the most fatal of all maladies to the Sepoy and camp-follower, and only little less dangerous in the case of the better fed and better clad European soldier.³

¹ Surgeon-Major G. J. H. Evatt's Recollections of the Afghan War.

² “Early in the campaign one could see how hopelessly unfit our heavy plains’ hospital equipment was for mountain warfare. In the first place, the tents, like those of all the European troops, were the huge European Private pattern, heavy, cumbersome, and unfit for mule, or camel-carriage in the highlands. Again, all the equipment was packed in unwieldy camel trunks, difficult to load, difficult to unload, crushing a fallen camel to the earth, and in which it was impossible to get at any small article.”—Evatt's Recollections.

³ Men who came from malarious stations like Peshawar and Mian Mir at once fell victims, and it seems true that malarial

Whilst Sir S. Browne was struggling with the difficulties attendant on the hasty assembling of a large Anglo-Indian force, on the borders of a wild and savage country,¹ his political officer, Major Cavagnari was continuing the negotiations by which it was hoped to smooth the way for a British advance upon Dakka. The Kuki Khels, whose lands lay close to the Indian border, on whom therefore it would be easy to bring military pressure to bear, had early yielded to the promises of liberal payment for all services to be rendered to the British troops, with which he supplemented his original assurances that the Indian Government would assume full responsibility for the subsidy which the Afridis would forfeit by siding with the Amir's enemies, and that the occupation of the Khyber should not be permanent, but cease as soon as the object of the war had been attained. It was not till the beginning of November, however, that

fever so diminishes the vital energy of a man that he succumbs easily to lung inflammation in these mountain climates." (Evatt's Recollections.)

The men of the 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade, who had been quartered at Naushahra, and those of the 81st Foot, who came from Peshawar, literally went sick by hundreds; whilst the 17th and the 51st Regiments, who had spent the summer in the Hills, marched into Jamrud in splendid condition, and, except for one outbreak of pneumonia in the former regiment, due to bivouacking without tents, maintained a very high level of health throughout the campaign.

¹ The Commander-in-Chief must have been very anxious as to the condition of Browne's Force, for on the 15th Nov., though overwhelmed with work, he made a flying visit to Peshawar to see for himself what progress was being made.

the Zakka Khels, the most powerful and most inaccessible section of that great tribe, followed the example thus set them; and in succumbing, at last, to the inducements held out, they may not have been altogether uninfluenced by the thought that the enjoyment of a British subsidy, need not debar them from plundering their ally's straggling convoys and ill-protected baggage trains; certainly, their acquiescence in the terms offered them was largely due to the anger and alarm, with which they viewed the occupation of their fortress of Ali Masjid by the Afghan troops.

But the political difficulties of the situation on the Peshawar frontier did not cease to exist when the tribe in possession of the Khyber had been conciliated; for, immediately behind the Afridis, to the north of that Pass, lay the territory of the Mohmands, a people who had always acknowledged the authority of the Amir, whose chief villages and most fertile valleys lay open to Afghan attack, and whose present chief, Mahomed Shah, owed his position to Shere Ali's favour. For them and him, it was a very serious matter to repudiate their allegiance to Afghanistan; and the British promise to evacuate the Khyber at the close of the war, which had done much to reconcile the Afridis to its temporary occupation, was the contrary of reassuring to their neighbours. Whilst the negotiations for the journey of the British Mission had been in progress, Mahomed Shah had sent a contingent to the support of Ali Masjid, and, probably with the sanction of the Afridi headmen, had occupied the Rotas Heights, a long, lofty, precipitous ridge, overlooking and commanding that fortress. Cavagnari met these measures by a clever political move. He invited to his

camp the sons of the late Governor—that Naroz Shah who had fled from Lalpura when Shere Ali was trying to bring the assassins of Major Macdonald to justice, and had been killed in exile—and treated them with ostentatious respect. The presence of his rivals, under such powerful protection, so near the Mohmand border, had so far the desired effect that Mahomed Shah made advances to the Indian Government's representative; but, distracted between the dangers threatening him from one side and the other, he allowed the negotiations to drag on from week to week, and it was not till two days before the outbreak of hostilities that, alarmed at the sight of the large British force mustering round Jamrud, he made up his mind to throw in his lot with the Power more immediately in a position to injure him, and withdrew from the Rotas Heights, leaving only a small post of observation on their crest, thus relieving Browne of all anxiety as to Mohmand interference with his plans for the capture of Ali Masjid.¹

These plans, in their general outline, had been determined by that General's knowledge of the certain heavy loss of life and probable failure that would be the consequences of a front attack upon Ali Masjid, and by the Indian Government's anxiety not to alienate the Afridis by penetrating into valleys which they prided themselves on having always preserved inviolate; for, whilst the first of these considera-

¹ Subsequent events showed that Mahomed Shah again wavered, for the Mohmands returned to the Rotas Heights, where their presence added greatly to the difficulties of the turning parties.

tions made a turning movement imperative, the second dictated the line which that movement must follow.¹ In the absence of maps, however, more knowledge of the country to be operated in was urgently required, and Captain G. Stewart of the Guides, and Mr. G. B. Scott of the Survey Department, had been busy all through the latter half of October, reconnoitring and collecting information as to the dispositions and strength of the enemy. Early in November, to confirm the results thus obtained, a small party consisting of Colonel Jenkins, Wigram Battye and Stewart of the Guides, Cavagnari and Scott, started from Jamrud before dawn one morning, and rode cautiously across the Jam plain to the foot of the Sarkai Hill.² Here, they dis-

¹ It has been suggested by some critics that Browne should have boldly pushed a portion of his force past Ali Masjid, and by cutting its communications with Dakka compelled its evacuation. But that fortress occupies a position of such extraordinary strength that to pass its guns by daylight, whilst every rock and bush and cave hid a resolute and well-armed foe, would have been impossible; and to slip by under cover of night, as Napoleon slipped by Bard, in the Val d'Aosta, would have been no less hazardous, for the garrison was on the alert, the road carefully watched by outlying pickets, and the Afridis, who were lying about as thick as bees, could not be trusted to keep their hands off their allies should misfortune overtake the latter.

² This ridge lies $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles west of the Jamrud fort. It runs north and south and occupies the ground lying between the narrow gorge known as the Shadi Bagiar (Wolf's Cave) and the true Khyber Pass, through which the river Khyber flows into the Jam plain. When Sir George Pollock forced the Khyber in 1842, his troops advanced through the Shadi Bagiar Pass, and the Sikh contingent up the Khyber stream.

mounted, and climbed up some five hundred feet to a ridge where a magnificent view suddenly opened before them. About ten miles away, and a little to the left, looking in the direction of Ali Masjid, stretched a long line of hills, from the eastern extremity of which a cataract of crags fell with terrible abruptness to the narrow gorge, scarce fifty yards across, through which the Khyber River cuts its course eastward, and, facing this declivity, rose the equally precipitous Rotas Heights. Between these mountains and the point occupied by the British officers lay a tangled mass of hills and ravines. In the dim light, Jenkins and his companions swept this mass, again and again, with their field-glasses; but it was not till the rising sun glinted upon its guns, that Ali Masjid became visible about four miles off, crowning a conical hill that peeped over a rugged ridge, on which breast-works and their defenders could now be clearly discerned, whilst the tents of a cavalry encampment, nestling at its base, started into view as the sunlight streamed down its side. From this encampment, a small body of horsemen was presently seen to emerge, ascend the Shahgai plateau, and ride leisurely across it to a small tower, just off the Mackeson road. Fearing discovery—for the picket was not more than two miles away—Jenkins withdrew his party to the back of the ridge and returned to Jamrud without mishap.

On the 16th of November, from the same point, Sir S. Browne himself reconnoitred the enemy, who were found to be still busy building stone breast-works; and on the 19th, just before transferring his Head Quarters to Jamrud, he laid the plans which these reconnais-

sances¹ had enabled him to correct and perfect, before the General Officers commanding Brigades and their respective Staffs. Those plans included a front attack and a turning movement. The latter—all operations to the left of the British position being barred—had necessarily to follow the narrow, rugged path to the right, or north, of the Khyber, which, skirting, but not actually touching Mohmand territory, led, first, northward up a drainage line in the heart of the hills, and, then, westward to the high plateau of Sapparai, where it divided into two tracks, one of which descended sharply to the Khyber, which it struck at Kata Kushtia, two miles beyond Ali Masjid; whilst the other, doubling back to the south, ran along the watershed till it terminated on the summit of the Rotas Heights, exactly above that fortress.

The front attack was to be led by Browne himself; the two columns selected to take part in the turning movement, by Brigadier-Generals Tytler and Macpherson, respectively; and, so far as it was possible to calculate the time needed for their march, it was arranged that the direct assault on Ali Masjid was to coincide with Tytler's appearance in the Khyber, and Macpherson's on the Rotas Heights—the latter commander dominating the enemy's position, whilst the former cut off his retreat.

By 3 o'clock on the afternoon of the 20th, the last troops of the First Division of the Peshawar Valley Field Force had marched into Jamrud, and by sunset, the leading

¹ The fruit of these reconnaissances was an admirable map by Mr. G. B. Scott, and some useful sketches by Captain G. Stewart.

Brigade of the Turning Force was under arms, ready to begin its adventurous march. Thus, under circumstances of almost inconceivable difficulty, Lord Lytton's orders had been obeyed, and, at three widely separated points, Anglo-Indian armies stood ready to cross the Afghan frontier; the advance of each being heralded by a Proclamation, in which the Viceroy threw the responsibility for the war that was about to commence, on the Amir, and assured the Sirdars and People of Afghanistan that with them the British Government had no quarrel, and that, having given no offence, they would not be lightly injured, or interfered with.¹

TABLE SHOWING THE CONSTITUTION OF THE 1ST DIVISION PESHAWAR VALLEY FIELD FORCE.

ENGINEERS.

Head-Quarters of Royal Engineers in India.

4 Companies of Sappers and Miners.

Engineer Field Park.

ARTILLERY.

I	Battery,	C	Brigade,	Royal Horse Artillery.
F	,,	3rd	,,	Royal Artillery.
No. 11	,,	9th	,,	,, (Mountain).
No. 13	,,	9th	,,	,, (Heavy Battery).
No. 4	Mountain Battery, Punjab Frontier Force.			
Ordnance Field Park.				

CAVALRY.

10th Hussars—(Two Squadrons).

11th Bengal Lancers.

Cavalry of Guide Corps.

¹ *Vide* Proclamation, Appendix II.

INFANTRY.

1ST BRIGADE.

4th Battalion Rifle Brigade.

20th Punjab Infantry.

4th Gurkhas.

2ND BRIGADE.

17th Foot.

1st Sikhs (Punjab Field Force).

Infantry of the Guide Corps.

3RD BRIGADE.

81st Foot.

14th Sikhs.

27th Punjab Infantry.

4TH BRIGADE.

51st Light Infantry.

45th Sikhs.

Sappers and Miners attached to this Brigade.

Approximate effective strength: 200 officers, 7,600 men of all ranks, 1,300 horses and 26 guns. ¹

¹ Staff and Departmental Officers, 1st Division Peshawar Valley Field Force:—Lieutenant G. T. Campbell, Aide-de-Camp; Captain Lord William Beresford, Orderly-Officer; Major G. W. Smith, Assistant Adjutant-General; Major G. E. L. S. Sanford, Assistant Quartermaster-General; Major A. A. A. Kinlock and Captain J. Davidson, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-Generals; Deputy Surgeon-General S. Gibbons, Principal Medical Officer; Lieutenant-Colonel J. V. Hunt, Chief Commissariat Officer; Colonel H. R. Mannsell, C.B., Commanding Engineer; Captain B. Lovett, C.S.I., Brigade-Major; Major H. F. Blair, Field-Engineer; Lieutenant W. Peacock, Assistant Field-Engineer; Colonel W. J. Williams, C.B., Commanding Artillery; Captain G. W. C. Rothe, Adjutant

Artillery; Captain W. G. Knox, Orderly-Officer: Brigadier-General C. J. S. Gough, V.C., C.B., Commanding Cavalry Brigade; Captain B. A. Combe, Brigade-Major; Brigadier-General H. T. Macpherson, V.C., C.B., Commanding 1st Infantry Brigade; Major H. T. Jones, Brigade-Major; Brigadier-General J. A. Tytler, V.C., C.B., Commanding 2nd Infantry Brigade; A. H. A. Gordon, Brigade-Major; Brigadier-General F. E. Appleyard, C.B., Commanding 3rd Infantry Brigade; Captain W. C. Farwell, Brigade-Major; Brigadier-General Brown, Commanding 4th Infantry Brigade; Major R. A. Wauchope, Brigade-Major; Major J. C. T. Humphry, In charge of Treasure Chest; Captain W. Hill, Provost-Marshal.

APPENDIX I

TRANSLATION of a Letter from His Excellency the CABUL ENVOY
to COLONEL SIR LEWIS PELLY, Envoy Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary, dated Saturday, the 3rd March, 1877.

After Compliments.

The letter, dated 27th February, 1877, which you sent by hand to Nawab Atta Mahomed Khan, reached my residence in Peshawar Cantonment on Tuesday, the 13th of the month of Safar (begins Tuesday evening), and the tenor of your friendly writing is ascertained.

It is true that either through Nawab Atta Mahomed Khan or personally you have stated that reports have reached you from many quarters, to the effect that the Ameer was exciting a Jihad against the British Government. Kind friend! I at that time told Nawab Atta Mahomed Khan that during the time I was there these matters had not place, and even now I am unaware as to what sort of matter this is. Secondly, I verbally told yourself (that kind friend) that this sort of matters pass in a variety of forms from mouth to mouth of the public till at length the news-writers write all sorts of things. Further, I place no reliance upon such statements. How can one rely upon the statements of the common people (public)? For when Captain Cavagnari, Deputy Commissioner, came to the frontier of his own limits on the road to Koorum, what papers and statements did not trustworthy men write, viz., that such a large army is coming to Koorum, and that the British Government has such and such designs? The most noble Ruler (the Ameer)

placed no reliance upon them. In what manner, then, can the authorities of the British Government place reliance upon such statements? Kind friend! I again write that I have no knowledge of these affairs.

In case, however, there should be something of the kind, whether the Government be a great one or a small one, and such an impossible measure be desired by a great Government, then every Government takes counsel for itself of the royal family, and also of the nobles and learned men, as well as of the chiefs of tribes and camps. Therefore, in such a matter, the carrying out of which is recorded upon the responsibility of that people, it is incumbent on the King that he should consult with every tribe in this matter. With every tribe which may be consulted, it is the custom that each one, in consultation, should separately express his own opinion. And those persons, when they return to their own audience-halls, are questioned by their people; for each has his own tribe and people, and each tells them that he advised such and such. And when the matter is talked of in those counsel-chambers, it becomes altered and changed, and then these people, when they go to their own homes, again say something else which produces another alteration. Besides this, there are interested persons who, for purposes of their own, add other matters to it, and send it off to news-writers in a different character. To believe in such sort of statements is far from friendship.

Again, you have written that "it now rests with His Highness "the Ameer to accept or to reject the most friendly proposal "of His Excellency the Viceroy which I had hoped to have "had the honour of discussing with you, his Envoy, in these "negotiations." Kind friend! With much deference I beg to say that, from the day I arrived, in the nine conferences, I have veiled nothing of the true state of the case. Whatever has been said in those nine conferences, and especially in the last conference on Monday, the 19th February, no change in that can be accorded.

That which you have written that "I feel bound you are

professedly conducting friendly negotiations at Peshawar.”* I repeat those very words of that kind one. From the day that I came to Peshawar with what varied arguments have I endeavoured to strengthen the customary friendship on the old footing! And in what manner did I bring it to an end in the last paragraph on Monday, the 19th February? Therefore, it is also surprising to me why you should not trust my word, but rely upon that of news-writers.

In the matter of the accusations you have written of†—Kind friend! From the day that I arrived, if there be a single matter on which it can be adduced that it was based on accusation, be pleased to make it clear. It is expected that that kind one will pay attention to my conversations and not to the absurdities of news-writers.

And that which you have written in regard to the Russian Government. This a very great question (*amriazim*), and I am also not instructed in this question that I should say anything. But since I am sorry at the mention of such a matter, I will, by reason of right, say, briefly from myself in a friendly manner, that from the day the most noble Ruler (Ameer) returned from Umballa to his capital of Cabul, the paper that came from the Russian Officers was opened, and the wax and seal removed in the presence of this very Agent of the British Government who is now present here, and who was summoned nightly for the purpose. After two or three days’ consultation, that very paper, in the original English, Persian, and Russian, was forwarded to Lord Mayo, and by his advice a paper was written

* Sentence incomplete.—This imperfect passage is a quotation from Sir L. Pelly’s letter, and should read:—“But I must protest against misrepresentations wilfully and publicly made, and against the Amir’s preaching a Jihad at Kabul, whilst his Highness’s Envoy Plenipotentiary is professing to negotiate on friendly terms at Peshawar.”

† Public accusations, said by Sir Lewis Pelly, to have been brought by the Amir against the British Government.

to the Officer of the Russian Government. From that day to the present day, what paper has come from the Russian Government a copy of which is not in the record office of the British Government? And what paper from the Ameer has been sent to them which is contrary to the tenor of that first paper which was written in consultation with Lord Mayo? You advance objection to those very writings which in this particular were from the British Government.

As to the Russian Agents: Will you (please) prove when a Russian Agent came into Afghanistan? Couriers of the Russian Officer, who are Mussulmans of the Syud and Sahibzada clan (both religious classes), do come for the purpose of delivering letters. If from the accident of winter, etc., he should remain five days or so, nobody has said to a guest, "Get thee out of my house." Since this matter of the Russian Government is a very great question, I cannot say more than this.

When I become honoured by returning to the most noble Ruler the Ameer, having thoroughly informed him of the views of the British Government in this particular, this point will become very well and satisfactorily cleared up. And that which you have written in respect to your own Agent, your Agent is present here, with the Ameer none of the nobles or chiefs are more respected and honoured than he has been. And what is the matter that they have kept concealed from him?

That which you have written that "the people of the city of Cabul have been publicly prohibited by the Mayor of the city of Cabul from going to the Embassy quarters." I have no belief in this.

In the matter that "there is not the slightest intention of attacking the Ameer." My friend! From the day that this friendship has continued, especially in these present discussions, at Peshawar, in which the whole discourse has been full of this, that the British Government (has declared that it) will in no manner interfere with or aggress upon the territories of the Ameer and of Afghanistan in which there should be displeasure to the Ameer or his successor, or there should be a decline in

the independence of that Government. Neither has the Ameer at any time shown any reliance upon the sayings of people with interested motives in respect to the British Government. The regard has always been and will be for the friendship of the British Government.

And that which you have written, viz., "Retract these libels in the same public manner that they have been promulgated." My friend! I will never admit that anybody can have made an accusation against the British Government. But in the particular of a proclamation in respect to the matters which have come to pass between us—when I have reached the Ameer's presence, and there informed him of the friendly views of the British Government, so far as I have seen and known, and also of these matters of contrary dispositions as to what is the reality of them and what their nature; having there weighed all these matters together with minuteness, it will be promulgated in a highly satisfactory manner as may be suited to the case, so that those proclamations shall openly reach the British Government.

Written on Saturday, 3rd March, 1877.

APPENDIX II

PROCLAMATION issued by the VICEROY, in English, Persian, and Urdu, on the 21st November, 1878.

THE Viceroy of India to the Ameer Sher Ali Khan, of Kabul, to his Sirdars and subjects, and to all the people of Afghanistan. It is now 10 years since the Ameer Sher Ali Khan, after a prolonged struggle, had at last succeeded in placing himself upon the throne of Kabul; at that time his dominion still needed consolidation, and the extent of it was still undefined. In these circumstances the Ameer, who had already been assisted by the British Government with money and with arms, expressed a wish to meet the Viceroy of India; his wish was cordially complied with; he was courteously received and honourably entertained by the Viceroy at Umballa; the countenance and support he had come to seek were then assured to him; he at the same time obtained further unconditional assistance in arms and money.* These tokens of the good-will of the British Government, which he gratefully acknowledged, materially aided the Ameer after his return to his own country in securing his position and extending his authority; since then the Ameer Sher Ali Khan has received from the British Government, in confirmation of its good-will, large additional gifts of arms; the powerful influence of the British Government has secured for him formal recognition by the Emperor of Russia of a fixed boundary between the Kingdom of Kabul and the Khanates of Bokhara and Kokand; the Amir's sovereignty over Wakhan and Badakshan was thereby

* Lord Mayo gave no money to Shere Ali.

admitted and made sure, a sovereignty which had till then been disputed by the Russian Government; his subjects have been allowed to pass freely throughout the Indian Empire, to carry on trade, and to enjoy all the protection afforded by the British Government to its own subjects; in no single instance have they been unjustly or inhospitably treated within British jurisdiction; for all these gracious acts the Ameer Sher Ali Khan has rendered no return, on the contrary he has requited them with active ill-will and open discourtesy. The authority over Badakshan, acquired for him by the influence of the British Government, was used by him to forbid passage through that province to a British officer of rank returning from a mission to a neighbouring State; he has closed, against free passage to British subjects and their commerce, the roads between India and Afghanistan; he has maltreated British subjects, and permitted British traders to be plundered within his jurisdiction, giving them neither protection nor redress; he has used cruelty and put to death subjects of his own on the mere suspicion that they were in communication with the British Government; he has openly and assiduously endeavoured by words and deeds to stir up religious hatred against the English, and incited war against the Empire of India. Having previously excluded British officers from every part of his dominions, and refused to receive a British mission; having left unanswered friendly communication addressed to him by the Viceroy, and repelled all efforts towards amicable intercourse between the British Government and himself, he has, nevertheless, received formally and entertained publicly at Kabul an embassy from Russia; this he has done at a time when such an act derived special significance from the character of contemporaneous events in Europe, and the attitude of England and Russia in relation thereto. Furthermore, he has done it well knowing that the Russian Government stands pledged by engagements with England to regard his territories as completely beyond the sphere of Russian influence. Finally, while this Russian embassy is still at his capital, the Ameer has forcibly repulsed at his outpost

an English envoy of high rank, of whose coming he had formal and timely announcement by a letter from the Viceroy,* attesting the importance and urgency of the envoy's Mission. Even then the British Government, still anxious to avert the calamities of war, deferred hostile action, and proffered to the Ameer a last opportunity of escaping the punishment merited by his acts. Of this opportunity the Ameer has refused to avail himself. It has been the wish of the British Government to find the best security for its Indian frontier in the friendship of a State whose independence it seeks to confirm, and of a Prince whose throne it has helped to support. Animated by this wish, the British Government has made repeated efforts to establish with the Ameer Sher Ali Khan those close and cordial relations which are necessary to the interests of the two neighbouring countries, but its efforts, after being persistently repulsed, have now been met with open indignity and defiance. The Ameer Sher Ali Khan, mistaking for weakness the long forbearance of the British Government, has thus deliberately incurred its just resentment. With the Sirdars and people of Afghanistan this Government has still no quarrel, and desires none. They are absolved from all responsibility for the recent acts of the Ameer, and as they have given no offence, so the British Government, wishing to respect their independence, will not willingly injure or interfere with them, nor will the British Government tolerate interference on the part of any other power in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Upon the Ameer Sher Ali Khan alone rests the responsibility of having exchanged the friendship for the hostility of the Empress of India.

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I N D E X

I N D E X

A

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